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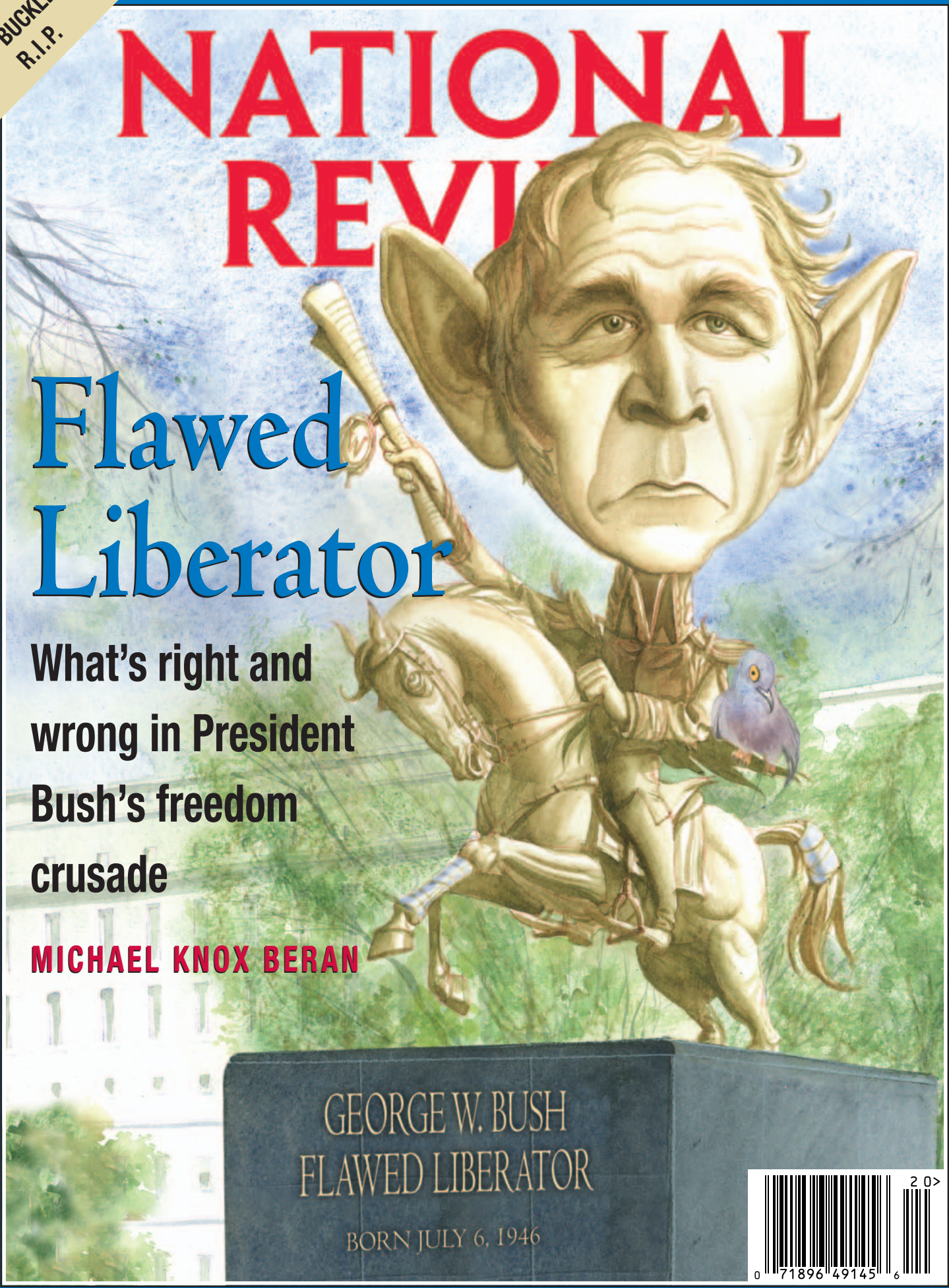
PAT BUCKLEY, R.I.P.

NATIONAL REVIEW

Flawed Liberator

What's right and wrong in President Bush's freedom crusade

MICHAEL KNOX BERAN



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NATIONAL REVIEW

MAY 14, 2007 VOL. LIX, NO. 8

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■ ESSAY

Flawed Liberator

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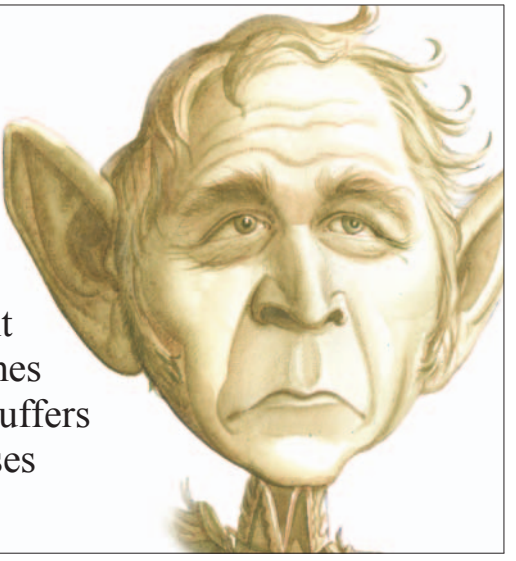
The president's detractors ridicule as "Bush babble" the rhetoric of his Second Inaugural Address, the high-water mark of his Freevangelical policy; and, as distressing news pours forth from Iraq, they point to his claim that "eventually the call of freedom comes to every mind and every soul" as evidence that he suffers acutely from a Messiah complex. The criticism misses the mark. *By Michael Knox Beran*



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letters to the editor

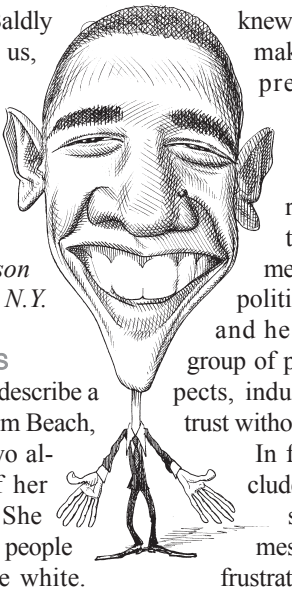
THAT'S MADAM SPEAKER, TO YOU

After her visit to North Vietnam, Jane Fonda became known to us as "Hanoi Jane." Can we now call Nancy Pelosi "Damascus Nancy"—or, for short, "Dam Nancy"? (Well, also, "A Dam Nancy" has a certain ring to it.)

Donald P. Kerwick
Hamilton, Ohio

GOIN' MAINSTREAM

What on earth is happening to NATIONAL REVIEW? First there are two articles touting John McCain. Now I see an article by John J. Miller ("Baldly Back," April 30), who tells us, like a transfixed college sophomore, that DDT was responsible for the bald eagle's decline. I might as well subscribe to *Newsweek*.



Alan Towson
Lynbrook, N.Y.

PLAYING THE PERCENTAGES

In The Week (April 30) you describe a "resources teacher" from Palm Beach, Fla., who was reviewing two algebra textbooks as part of her doctoral-studies research. She was horrified that 276 of 380 people depicted in the books were white. You were horrified that publishers managed to cram 380 pictures into two math books. I am horrified that a doctoral student at my alma mater can't calculate that a balance of 276 in 380 pictures (72.6 percent) approximately represents the distribution of whites in the population.

Tony Veiga
Orange Park, Fla.

HOPE FLOATS

At first glance Richard Lowry seems to have Barack Obama figured out ("The Great Audacious Hope," March 5). Mr. Lowry rightly notes the centrality of Obama's vague yet comfortable message of hopefulness. He properly takes Obama to task for his lack of detail and concrete policy positions, and for the underlying arrogance in Obama's message that is perceived by those who do not emotionally or intuitively already accept what Obama is offering. However, when Mr. Lowry suggests that Obama is miscalculating the "very stuff of politics" and that the general voters will tire of Obama's repackaged, yet empty, Oprah-style liberalism, I think it is Mr. Lowry who underestimates Obama and not Obama who underestimates our political culture.

When I first heard Obama's smooth, folksy brand of redistributionist liberalism as his law-school classmate, I knew he was someone who could make the most radical policy prescription seem reasonable. (And at Harvard Law School they were sure radical.) Today, his pleasant and reasonable style transcends the "conflict and disagreement" that bogs down ordinary politics. Obama is not ordinary, and he speaks to a much larger group of people than Mr. Lowry suspects, inducing their acceptance and trust without the need to be "specific." In fact, what Mr. Lowry concludes is a weakness is actually a strength, as Obama's vague message of hope speaks to the frustration and cynicism of today's electorate, much of which will all too easily embrace him without really knowing or caring what he intends to do with the power he seeks.

William Ryan
Chicago, Ill.

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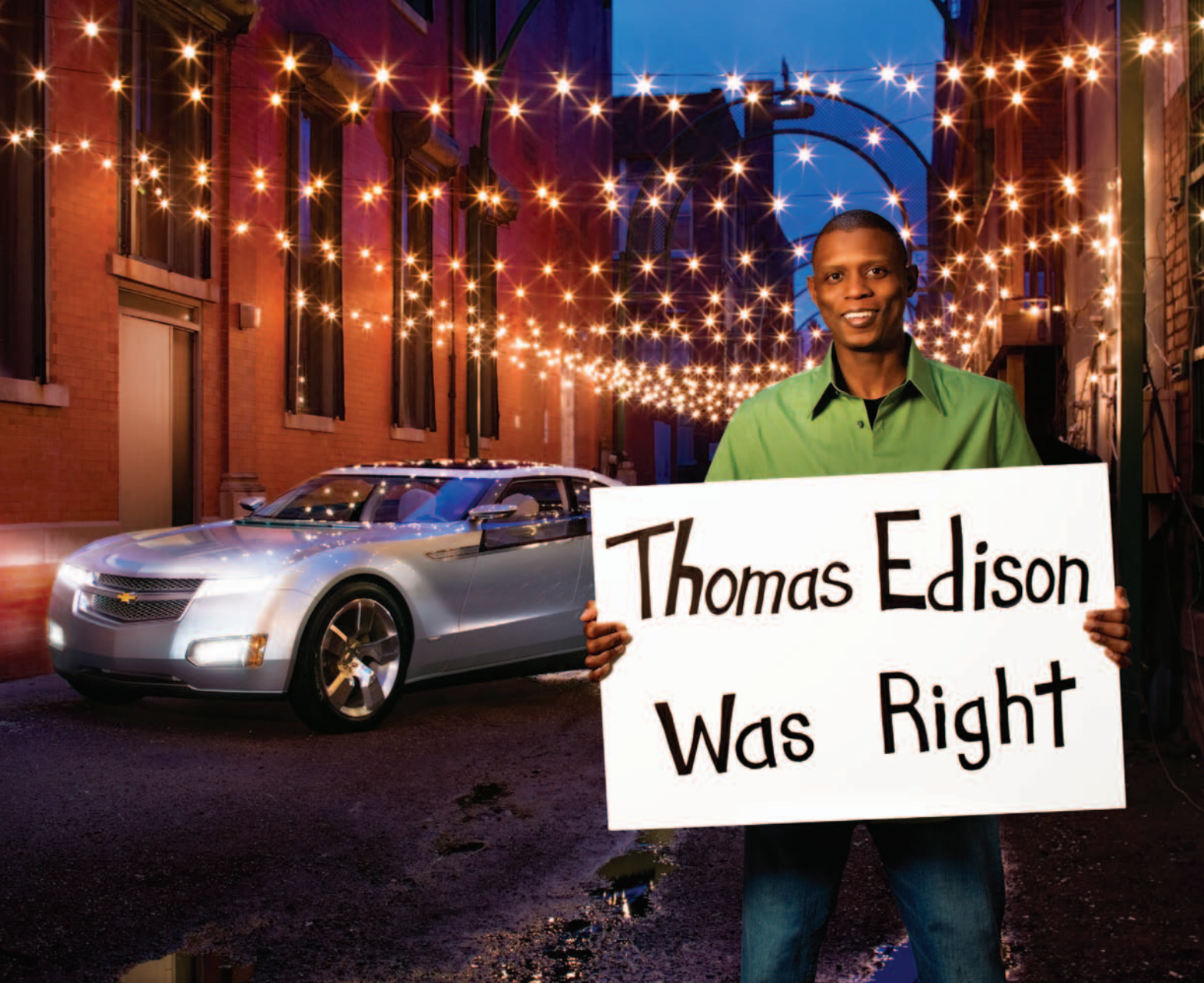

Imagine a car that plugs into an electric socket. One that uses zero gasoline and produces zero emissions. Thomas Edison imagined it, or something like it, over 100 hundred years ago. Today, I'm helping to bring it to life in GM's landmark Chevy Volt—a four passenger concept vehicle that will be powered by GM's E-Flex propulsion system that will deliver 40 miles of pure electric vehicle range.

It's just one part of GM's commitment to energy diversity—creating vehicles that use fuels from diverse sources, reducing our dependence on petroleum and lowering emissions. I'm part of the team in Detroit that's working on a transformation in vehicles today.

Jelani Aliyu

Jelani Aliyu

Lead Creative Designer, Chevrolet Volt

GM

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THE WEEK

■ You should hear Alec Baldwin's voicemails to *us*.

■ If John McCain had jokingly sung "bomb, bomb Iran" during his 2000 nomination run, reporters would have dissolved in appreciative laughter, tickled at the rascally authenticity of the Arizona senator. Now, his playful riff off the classic song is practically considered evidence of his dangerous instability. The parting of McCain and the mainstream media now is complete, the rupture sealed by McCain's eloquent and heartfelt speech at the Virginia Military Institute making the case for trying to win the war in Iraq. The speech represented the kind of poll-defying courage that media types usually say they yearn for, but the press loves its narrative of defeat in Iraq more than it ever loved John McCain. Expect tense times ahead on the Straight Talk Express.

■ Senate majority leader Harry Reid made the mistake of saying what he and most Democrats believe about the Iraq War—that it's lost. The L-word is still considered impolitic, so Democrats have been backing-and-filling. Reid tries to associate his remarks with Gen. David Petraeus, by perversely arguing that Petraeus's utterly unobjectionable belief that there isn't a purely military solution in Iraq is somehow tantamount to Reid's declaration of defeat. Senator Schumer explains that Reid believes the current Iraq War is lost, but that some fantasy Iraq war in which we fight al-Qaeda in Iraq from a safe distance—as the country presumably descends into further hell—is still winnable. Reid is letting al-Qaeda's car-bombing campaign obscure the signs of promise from the surge, but at least he's being honest about what he thinks. It would be more honest still if Democrats admitted that their proposed mandate for a withdrawal starting in October—which President Bush should and will veto—is meant to be nothing more than the capstone to an American defeat in Iraq.

■ Hillary Clinton addressed Al Sharpton's National Action Network, and for the second time when speaking to a black audience (the first was at a Baptist church in Selma in March) her voice got positively . . . *nappy*. The normal Hillary is as flat as a menu on an 800 number, but with the brothaz and sistaz she drops her g's, and gets the lilt thing workin'. She talked 'bout "havin' to clean up after people" (lotsa black folks cleans up white folks' messes, nome sayn?). Does she think black people cannot understand intelligent white people? They have been hearing white people all their lives, though perhaps not intelligent ones. Who has the brass to ask her what she means by this nonsense? Stanley Crouch? Margo Jefferson? Maureen Dowd?

■ Barack Obama gave his take on Virginia Tech in a speech in Milwaukee. "There's also another kind of violence that we're going to have to think about. It's not necessarily the physical violence, but the violence that we perpetrate on each other in other ways . . . verbal violence [e.g., Don Imus] . . . the violence of men and women who have worked all their lives and suddenly have the rug pulled out from under them because their job is moved to another country . . . the violence of children whose voices are not heard in communities that are ignored." The violence of hacks hitching a ride on emotional express trains. . . . Oh, wait—

ROMAN GENN

■ Those $400 haircuts that John Edwards got from a Beverly Hills stylist were money well spent: Since his hair is his best asset, he should take care of it. But they distract from his performance as tribune of the people. How real was that, for Edwards, or any Democrat? The political scientist Edward Pessen wrote an interesting book almost 25 years ago, *The Log Cabin Myth*. How many American presidents had been born in such structures, actually or metaphorically? Pessen's conclusion: only six. Even more interesting, four were Republicans (Lincoln, Garfield, Nixon, Reagan) and one was a Whig (Fillmore). The only salt-of-the-earth Democrat was Andrew Johnson, the Joe Lieberman of the Civil War. Pessen wrote before Bill Clinton, who talked a good poor boy's game though his stepfather ran a Buick dealership. Support the people, vote for the best people.

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THE WEEK...

■ What was the cause of the recent mass killings at Virginia Tech? Sen. Joe Biden has the answer. Speaking at an event hosted by Al Sharpton's race-baiting—oops, sorry—"civil rights" group, Biden said: "I would argue, since 1994 with the Gingrich revolution, just take a look at Iraq, Venezuela, Katrina, what's gone down at Virginia Tech, Darfur, Imus. Take a look. This didn't happen accidentally, all these things." You mean, senator, that all the evils of the past 13 years have a common cause? What is it? Why, explained Jolly Joe, it's the "politics of polarization" promoted by Newt Gingrich, George W. Bush, and Karl Rove. Gosh, that explains everything! Hurricanes; populist movements in Latin America; berserk lunatics with guns; genocide in Africa . . . Plainly there is a common thread—those evil Republicans! But what about the first World Trade Center bombing, the Waco disaster, the Unabomber, the Somalia fiasco, the Rwanda massacres, the Simpson murders, the Tonya Harding and Lorena Bobbitt outrages, and the major-league-baseball strike? Didn't they occur under a Democratic president and Congress, senator? Senator? Hello, senator?

CHUCK KENNEDY/MCT

■ Attorney general Alberto Gonzales's April 19 performance before the Senate Judiciary Committee—the appearance in which he admitted he could not remember why he fired some U.S. attorneys—embarrassed many members of his party. But not, it seems, its most important member. "The attorney general went up and gave a very candid assessment," President Bush said a few days later, "and answered every question he could possibly answer, honestly answer, in a way that increased my confidence in his ability to do the job." What could Gonzales have done that would have *decreased* the president's confidence in him? It was clear to anyone watching the hearing that Gonzales is not really in control of the Justice Department and that he mostly does what his senior staff tells him to do—including firing some U.S. attorneys without good reason, after which he botched the job of explaining his actions. We do not believe that Gonzales is corrupt: The Judiciary Committee's investigation has turned up no evidence that the U.S. attorneys were fired to interfere with any investigations, as Democrats have charged. But the hearing exposed a serious leadership deficit at the Gonzales Justice Department. We have already called on the attorney general to resign because he is simply not up to running the department. His performance in the Senate only confirmed that belief.

■ Paul Wolfowitz, Bush's appointee to the presidency of the World Bank, stands accused of using his position to get big raises and cushy jobs for his girlfriend, Shaha Riza, a fellow Bank employee. The Bank bureaucracy is united against Wolfowitz, as are the usual suspects in the press. But even a cursory examination of the evidence shows that the case against Wolfowitz has no basis in fact. Wolfowitz was already involved with Riza—a longtime Bank employee—when he arrived in 2005. He told the Bank's directors about the relationship before he took the job and further told them that he wanted to recuse himself from decisions involving her. The directors felt that Riza should either quit her job or be transferred to another agency. But they also said that if she transferred, she should be given a raise because she was already in line for one at the Bank. So off Riza went to the State Department, with a good raise. (If there's any scandal here, it's the high salaries and luxurious benefits of many World Bank employees.) Now, two years later, some of those same directors want to get rid of Wolfowitz for doing the very thing they originally approved. The truth is, there's another agenda at work here. Wolfowitz has pledged to root out corruption among aid recipients, which does not sit well with Bank employees. He is also a strong proponent of the war in Iraq, which in the bureaucracy's view is another (big) strike against him. And finally, he is an American, which irritates the Europeans who want control of the place. Put it all together, and the "scandal" isn't about Paul Wolfowitz as much as it is about an entrenched, comfortable, and corrupt bureaucracy resisting anyone who might dare reform it.

■ The Pentagon is extending the tours of most active-duty Army units in Iraq and Afghanistan in order to ensure that troops have a full year at home between tours. It faced this choice because President Bush has not done more to rebuild the military after its Clinton-era downsizing. Consider a few numbers: From 1974 to 1989, the Army had 770,000 to 780,000 active troops (all of them volunteers). Today, we have around 508,000. The Navy had 568 ships in the late 1980s; today it has 276. The Air Force's number of tactical air wings has shrunk from 37 to 20, and the average age of its aircraft is 24 years (as compared with nine years in 1973). There is disagreement about whether the armed forces should be restored to their Cold War size, but there is consensus among military analysts across the political spectrum that they should be bigger. Mitt Romney has called for adding 100,000 soldiers and boosting defense spending to 4 percent of GDP. These are sensible proposals, and we hope the other GOP candidates make similar ones. There is no excuse for fighting with a September 10 military.

THOSE ABORTION NUANCES

Nancy's coming up for air
(People had begun to stare).
Harry's breathing down her neck,
Justice Ginsburg is a wreck—
Plus the Missus; so we'll just
Have to let the girl adjust,
Suck it in and carry on.
Boxer has been looking wan.

—W. H. VON DREELE

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The Week...

■ The Senate voted to provide federal funding for stem-cell research that involves the destruction of human embryos taken from fertility clinics. The debate included the usual hyperbole: Senator Lieberman and the editors of the *Los Angeles Times* claimed that the federal government had a "ban" on such research, and the funding was said to hold the key to curing everything from Alzheimer's disease to juvenile diabetes. The most honest proponents of embryo-destructive stem-cell research, however, are willing to admit two inconvenient truths. The first is that it is exceedingly unlikely that any such research will yield some of the most heavily advertised cures, such as for Alzheimer's. The second is that the embryos that happen to be at fertility clinics are not ideal for their purposes: They need to be able to clone human embryos on which to perform research. As time goes by, our guess is that more and more of them are going to admit a third truth: that it is possible to attain any of these research benefits without destroying human embryos at all. By vetoing this ill-considered legislation, President Bush might buy time for this truth to be generally acknowledged.

■ Georgia legislators recently passed a law that would require a woman seeking an abortion to sign a statement indicating whether she had taken the opportunity to view an image of the fetus. It would also give her the opportunity to hear the fetus's heartbeat before an abortion. The bill's authors plainly intend the law to cut down on abortions. It is a worthwhile bill. It is a testament, however, to how many constraints the Supreme Court has put on pro-life legislators that they have been reduced to meekly asking women to look into the eyes of their unborn children before doing away with them.

The New Tax Revolt

It has hardly received notice in the national media, but a tax revolt is breaking out all over America. In Florida, for example, the house and senate have separately passed property-tax-reform plans that would either reduce or eliminate property taxes altogether. Last year, South Carolina, New Jersey, and Idaho cut property taxes. New York, Arizona, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island granted larger property-tax rebates and capped annual increases. Texas passed a $15.7 billion property-tax cut. Georgia's legislature just approved a $142 million property-tax cut, awaiting signature from Governor Perdue. Why, even Connecticut is on the move.

This stealthy revolt may have a major impact on the 2008 election.

Why the sudden interest in property taxes? A real-estate bubble might terrify financial markets, but it is welcome news to local governments that rely on property taxes to finance their activities. The common practice is to leave property-tax rates uncut, and thus to allow revenues to skyrocket as home prices do.

Prices have gone up a lot, and taxes have marched right up with them. As a result, the rate of increase of property taxes has been nearly unprecedented. Between 2000 and 2004 (the latest year for which we have data), property-tax payments have risen an astounding 27.7 percent nationwide. No wonder voters are angry enough to seek relief. It seems unlikely that local government services have improved 27.7 percent over the same time period.

These taxes have not risen uniformly. As illustrated in the accompanying chart, some states have been hit much more severely than others. The red states (forgive me) in the chart are those that have seen their taxes increase by more than 30 percent. These states include key swing states such as Florida, and 2004 blue states California, Maine, and Wisconsin.

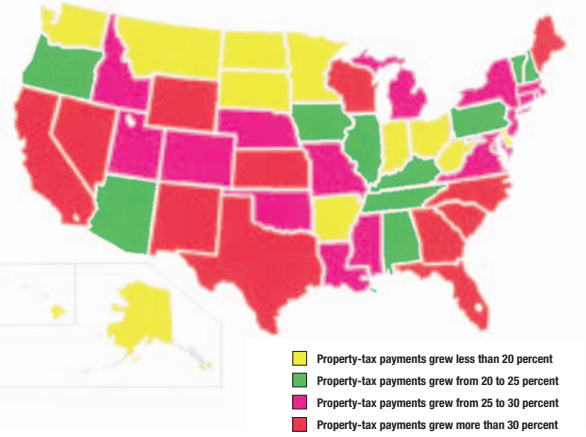
The depth of despair over high property taxes and widespread attempts to roll them back have a political precedent. In 1978, the voters of California approved Proposition 13, a measure that rolled back property taxes by an average of 57 percent. The revolt spread across the country. Even Massachusetts, perhaps the most liberal state in the Union, passed its own "Proposition 2-1/2" in 1980. Proposition 2-1/2 limited the growth rate of property taxes to that percentage.

Ronald Reagan adeptly capitalized on the anti-tax sentiment, agreeing to do a radio ad in favor of Proposition 13 back in 1978, and then riding the tax-revolt wave all the way to the White House (winning even Massachusetts). As Joel Fox recalled in an article for National Review Online, Reagan called Proposition 13 "the first amazing shot in the nationwide tax revolt."

Today's tax revolt is long past its first shot. As presidential candidates attend town-hall meetings and learn about voters' concerns, some of them will surely spot the same opportunity that Reagan did.

—Kevin A. Hassett

State and Local Government Property-Tax Payments, Growth Rates from 2000–2004


Property-tax payments grew less than 20 percent
Property-tax payments grew from 20 to 25 percent
Property-tax payments grew from 25 to 30 percent
Property-tax payments grew more than 30 percent

SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, *SURVEY OF GOVERNMENT FINANCES*

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THE WEEK...

■ The first-round results of the French presidential election have, as expected, set up a runoff between Nicolas Sarkozy of the Right and Ségolène Royal of the Left. Sarkozy would give France more economic freedom and a more Atlanticist foreign policy. Royal advocates a kinder, gentler version of reform that is really a coded defense of the French "social model." Economic reform alone is not, however, enough to win electoral victories for conservative parties. It has to be coupled with other issues that concern those voters who may not gain quickly from free-market policies and may even initially lose from them. In France today these issues include crime, immigration, the Muslim challenge, loss of sovereignty to supranational bodies, the divisive failure of multiculturalism, and the crumbling of national identity. Royal is too compromised by the Left's multiculturalism to discuss these issues with any plausibility. Sarkozy alone can do so—provided that his vision of France is inclusive rather than defensive. It is his great opportunity not only to win the election in two weeks but also to begin a revival of France that must go beyond the merely economic.

■ What did the BBC ever do to—indeed, what has it ever not done for—the Palestinians? These must be the questions on the mind of many a BBC mandarin ever since Alan Johnston, the service's correspondent in Gaza City, was taken captive in March. Even after praise of Johnston as "a friend of the Palestinian people" from no less a man than Marwan Barghouti, a Fatah leader, who is presently incarcerated by Israel for his role in orchestrating a handful of suicide bombings, Johnston has remained in captivity. The incident lacks the usual grist of Gaza Strip kidnappings: Neither a monetary demand nor a lopsided exchange of the kidnapped for a hundred or so Israeli-held "political prisoners" has been proffered. No one—except, dubiously, a previously unheard-of group claiming to have links to al-Qaeda—has taken responsibility (though Britain's National Union of Journalists has blamed *Israel* for Johnston's continued captivity, helpfully calling for a boycott of Israeli goods). The whole situation has, once more, made a mockery of the Palestinian Authority's ability to govern even the small territory it ostensibly controls. One day, the PA claims to be powerless to put an end to Johnston's ongoing captivity, and the next, it rushes to proclaim, amidst rumors to the contrary, that Johnston has not (yet) been decapitated. Such are the workings of a "government" incapable of doing even the smallest things, much less effectively governing a state.

■ Yahoo! is being sued in U.S. court on behalf of Wang Xiaoning, a Chinese citizen. Mr. Wang anonymously posted articles calling for the end of China's one-party rule in a Yahoo! group. According to the suit, the Chinese authorities demanded that Yahoo! give them information about the poster, and Yahoo! complied. Wang was then arrested in China, beaten severely by the police, and sentenced to ten years in prison. "Do you Yahoo!?" If so—and even if not—remember Wang Xiaoning.

■ An extraordinary tale of Cold War heroism has recently come to light. This is the case of CIA agents Richard Fecteau and John Downey, captured by the Communist Chinese on a mission into southeastern Manchuria during the Korean War. Fecteau was released in 1971 after 19 years' imprisonment; Downey in 1973, following Richard Nixon's visit to China. The Downey-Fecteau case has been known in outline for many years, but only recently has a detailed, unclassified account been published in the CIA in-house magazine *Studies in Intelligence*. After some beatings at the time of their capture, the two men were not physically tortured, but their living conditions were very harsh, and every kind of psychological pressure was used against them. A favorite was what Fecteau called "the whipsaw": Their captors would improve conditions—providing better food, access to books and magazines, or a luxury such as soap—only to reverse course. There were spells of solitary confinement, one lasting *six years*. Both men are still alive; both had useful and successful professional lives in the U.S. after their 20-year ordeals. All honor and glory to two American heroes.

■ Call it the "can't cant." One simply can't criticize Israel in America—that is, unless one wishes to sell a half-million copies of *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid*, like Jimmy Carter; or, like John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, to get a million-copy print run for a coming book about the pernicious Israel lobby that controls American foreign policy. George Soros has picked up the charge in a recent article in *The New York Review of Books*, blaming the Bush administration for the rise of Hamas, even managing quietly to blame AIPAC for certain "attitudes toward the Jewish community"—that is, anti-Semitism. Palestinians, you see, can't be responsible for either. Odd is the man who seeks to blame the Jews for their persecution; malefic the man who forgives Hamas its murders. Soros and his anti-Israel lobby would like Israel to negotiate itself out of existence, to bargain with terrorists who seek its wholesale destruction. President Bush and Prime Minister Olmert, whether through AIPAC's influence or their own prudence, have thankfully refused.

■ More than a year after their ordeal began, the three Duke lacrosse players accused of raping a stripper at a team party were declared "innocent" by North Carolina attorney general Roy Cooper. To that extent, justice was done. What justice should be done to Mike Nifong, the Durham County prosecutor who misled a judge and hid exculpatory evidence, in order to press an election-year case against Great White Defendants? Cooper rightly called Nifong a "rogue prosecutor"; disbarment should be the minimum sanction. And what justice for Crystal Gail Mangum, whose lies set the case in motion? Her name, like Tawana Brawley's, should at least become a byword for hateful, and self-hating, mendacity. And what of the 88 Duke faculty members who rushed to judgment on their students? Promotions all round, for confronting the structures of oppression. Verb. sap., for students: Don't hire strippers for parties. And for parents: Find some other place to spend $40,000 a year.

YURI KADOBNOV/AFP

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Stephan is the Winthrop Professor of History at Harvard University

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The Week...

■ Don Imus, universal bogeyman for a week, seems a million years old now. There is nothing like real horror to restore one's priorities. But before he slips into Google limbo, two points about his fall: It is a bad day when Al Sharpton becomes a moral arbiter (in his death throes, Imus appeared on Sharpton's radio show). Sharpton is a convicted slanderer, and an unindicted inciter to riot—reckless, mendacious, pernicious. In a vain attempt at gotcha, Sharpton and other Imus harpies were asked when they would condemn black entertainers who routinely call young black women hos and bitches. They will, for sure; which means they won't, for real. Which means that, by our deeds, we declare that self-inflicted wounds do not matter—when in fact, at this stage of our national life, long after the Klan and minstrel shows, they may be the most hurtful wounds of all.

WENN PHOTOS

■ Rock singer Sheryl Crow has joined the global-warming nags, touring the U.S. on a biodiesel-powered bus with environmental activist Laurie David to spread the good word on college campuses. What suggestions does Miss Crow have for our nation's students? How might they, to use her own words, "become a part of the solution to global warming"? Well, they might be more sparing in their use of toilet paper. In fact, Crow seems to think that legislative action is called for in this area: "I propose a limitation be put on how many squares of toilet paper can be used in any one sitting." She suggests using only one square per visit. Goodness! We know, of course, that the Nanny State is advancing on all fronts, but we did not think it would advance on all rears, too—taking over one of Nanny's more disagreeable tasks. And only one square? Even British army recruits were traditionally allowed three: "One up, one down, and one to put a shine on it."

■ Miss America 1944 was Venus Ramey of Kentucky, the first redhead to win the title. Now aged 82, Ramey lives on a farm in her native state. The other day, Ramey, alerted by her dog, found an intruder in the act of stealing scrap metal from one of her storage buildings. The embarrassed but unrepentant thief said that if Ramey would get out of his way, he would leave. "Oh no you won't," declared the retired beauty queen. She thereupon pulled out a snub-nosed .38 and shot out a tire on the intruder's car, balancing on her walker for a steady aim. The thief was subsequently arrested. "I'm trying to live a quiet, peaceful life and stay out of trouble, and all it is, is one thing after another," complained Ramey. We know the feeling, ma'am; but thanks for reminding us that on those inevitable occasions when trouble comes looking for you, a snub-nosed .38 can be very handy.

■ It is hard now to remember the days when Boris Yeltsin was regarded as a hero, but a hero he was. By resigning as the Communist party boss of Moscow, he made himself the leader of the opposition to the dying regime. By standing against an attempted putsch a few years later, he ensured that he would be the first elected president of a post-Communist Russia. But then the dreaming had to stop. Privatization was botched, with state assets being transferred to the connected. Markets and democracy were discredited. Yeltsin's alcoholism symbolized the nation's ill health and made it harder for it to recover. He was unable to build a functioning state to enforce the rule of law, and Vladimir Putin has capitalized on his failure in order to create a functioning authoritarianism. He should be honored for what he did before he became president. R.I.P.

■ Kurt Vonnegut was a last-century artifact, combining dogmatic left-wing politics with whimsy, sentiment, and a few science-fiction tricks in a way that led people, beginning with himself, to think of him as a Sage. If he outlasts Charles Reich and Jefferson Airplane, it will be thanks to *Slaughterhouse-Five*, his novel of the firebombing of Dresden, which he lived through as an American prisoner of war. There the intrusive japery stands for the mind's refusal to process it all, a fortuitous fit of style and subject. Yet his best book may have done the most harm: Precisely because *Slaughterhouse-Five* was so (relatively) well written, it taught a generation of high-school students to think that it did not matter who won World War II. Dead at 84, R.I.P.

■ Johnny Hart won many awards from his fellow cartoonists. He was immensely popular with the general public as well: His *B.C.* strip ran in over 1,300 newspapers, reaching some 100 million readers. But in his last years, he earned a different sort of distinction: He braved the disapproval of media elites in the name of his religious faith. Every so often, he would use his strips to mention Christianity, in a positive way; newspaper editors would then tend to discover that censorship is not as bad as they had otherwise led us to believe, and that its dreaded "chilling effect" can in fact be quite tolerable if it marginalizes such dangerous views as Hart's (e.g., that Jesus rose from the dead; not just a violation of the separation of church and cartooning, but obviously the sort of thing innocent children shouldn't be exposed to in a family newspaper). Johnny Hart died on April 7 at age 76, and is now in a place where the writ of political correctness doesn't run. R.I.P.

VIRGINIA TECH

Rampage

We made the acquaintance of spree killers not so long ago; perhaps the first was Charles Starkweather, who went on a lethal joyride with his underage girlfriend in 1958. Seung-Hui Cho, the murderer of 32 students and teachers at Virginia Tech, is only the latest, and most lethal.

But spree killers did not invent sadistic homicide. Many of the pirates and robbers of the past—Edward Teach (Blackbeard), the James gang, Pretty Boy Floyd—went far beyond greed for gain in their mayhem. The same goes for

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In the new issue of the Hoover Digest . . .

Crossing to Safety in Latin America

Crime is robbing the region of talent, jobs, and its role in the global economy.

Criminal activity in Latin America is the bane of rich, middle class, and poor alike. It steals pesos from the shopkeeper and economic opportunities from the well educated. It makes neighborhoods unwalkable and diverts thousands of jobs into unproductive private security. Moreover, it feeds on itself. The police are often criminals themselves, easily corruptible and with no incentive to make things better.

Many people in the region are resigned to crime, as if it were inevitable in modern economies and societies. But the U.S. experience shows that to be false: when more criminals began to be caught and sent to prison, crime dropped. Latin American leaders can purge crooked cops and make sure new ones do the job they were hired for—while paying them well, to keep them away from bribery and other corrupt acts. It is also critical to improve earnings from and availability of legal jobs, especially for workers at the low end of the job spectrum. In the long run, a good education for young people from poor families would help most of all.

—Gary S. Becker

How to Turn Iran Upside Down

Tehran's weakened hard-liners yearn for a U.S. attack. Why oblige them?

The already tense U.S.-Iran relationship is now a tinderbox. The Islamic Republic trains and supports Hezbollah and Hamas; it provides aid and explosives to Iraqi Shiite militias who attack American soldiers; and, most alarming, it seems determined to develop a nuclear bomb. Bombing Iran, however, would not resolve any of these dangers—it would worsen them.

But where military strikes would fail, a different approach would succeed. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is neither the most powerful official in Iran nor beloved by the Iranian people. He has not delivered on his campaign pledges to fight corruption or improve the lot of the working classes and the poor. The authoritarian regime is not united behind Ahmadinejad, who knows there is only one thing that could bring the people back to him—a U.S. military attack. Rather than throw the reactionaries a lifeline, the United States should offer to negotiate unconditionally. Then, if Ahmadinejad says no, he would have to face a different foe: his own angry public.

—Abbas Milani, Larry Diamond, and Michael McFaul

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many a soldier, especially in irregular wars: Indian wars, the American Revolution in the South, the margins of the Civil War. Armies have an interest in discipline, but there are always psychos lurking in the ranks, or beyond the fringe. John Brown gave his bloodshed a damnable glow of poetry and idealism, which entranced Thoreau.

So long as men are not angels, the rate of senseless killings will be essentially constant. How can we lower it at the margins? The solution of magical thinkers is to ban the weapons of destruction: People don't kill people, guns do. But Virginia Tech had banned weapons. Societies with strict gun control have had spree killers (Quebec, Scotland). By contrast, Utah, which does not allow campus gun bans, has had no spree killings. Is it our ears, or are the calls to ban guns less loud after this crime, because the Democrats won congressional seats in 2006 by running pro-gun liberals?

We might have better luck trying to identify, treat, and, if necessary, restrain the mad. The stock response of clueless neighbors after a rampage is that the criminal was "quiet." No one thought of Cho that way; he was willfully silent, and scary. Classmates and professors feared him, even joking that he might do such a thing. Colleges claim to be entangled by laws that protect privacy; they also have an institutional bias toward collecting tuition. New York City, under Rudy Giuliani, was able to round up violent, demented bums. Why not our campuses?

We can clean up after our aftermaths, if that is any consolation. Cho prepared what NATIONAL REVIEW ONLINE's Peter Suderman called an information package for the YouTube age. NBC News, to whom it was sent, greedily broadcast it, and got a day's bounce in the ratings. Solemn suits spoke of their internal debates; we bet they lasted all of 15 seconds. So the creep won *American Idol*, Death Division. We heard some, but could hear more, of the heroes of that day—those who were quick, brave, and lucky enough to make a difference: Liviu Librescu, the 76-year-old Holocaust survivor, who barricaded the door of his solid-mechanics class to let students escape; Derek O'Dell and two other students in a German class, who held their door shut to prevent Cho from reentering. Librescu died: He was lucky? Yes, lucky to do the right thing, to be beloved of God and honored by men. Let us honor the heroes even more.

THE LAW

Partial Truth about Partial-Birth

In their statements denouncing the Supreme Court for upholding a ban on partial-birth abortion, the leading Democratic presidential contenders never got around to explaining the nature of the procedure they were defending. John Edwards and Barack Obama did not even use the word "abortion" in their statements. So let us supply some missing context: In a partial-birth abortion, a fetus is partially removed from the womb; its skull is punctured; its brains—sorry, its "intracranial contents"—are sucked out; and then the whole body is removed from the womb.

The Constitution cannot plausibly be read to create a right to obtain this procedure, and the Supreme Court has, by a 5-to-4 vote, just acknowledged the point. The arguments in dissent are not compelling. They are not even consistent with one another. Senator Edwards complains that the ban was "sweeping"; but most other critics say that the ban singles out a procedure too "rarely" employed to be worth banning.

Estimates of how widely the procedure is used vary, with 2,000 a year being a widely accepted minimum estimate. That is a small fraction of all abortions. To call it "rare," however, is to assume that abortions in the fifth and sixth months of pregnancy are morally insignificant. If newborns died at that rate in hospitals, there would be congressional investigations.

The major criticism of the law made by the Democrats, as well as by the four dissenting justices, is that it does not include an "exception" for the mother's health. In truth, they do not want a mere exception. They don't want anything at all to be banned. There are no circumstances in which a partial-birth abortion is necessary to save a mother's health from a dangerous pregnancy. Justice Ginsburg's dissenting opinion does not even try to argue otherwise. Rather, the argument is that an abortionist might conclude that partial-birth abortion is in some instances the safest method of abortion. In other words, partial-birth abortion has to be allowed in any case in which an abortionist wants to perform it.

If unborn children cannot be protected in the womb, then at least they can be given some protection when they are partially outside it.

The Court's decision left room for a genuine health exception. It allows courts to block prosecutions under the law when it is being applied too broadly. But it does not strike down the entire law on the theory that it might, somewhere, at some time, be applied too broadly. And since there are no circumstances in which partial-birth abortion really is medically necessary, it is going to be hard for the abortion lobby to bring such cases.

The dissenters' last argument wins the prize for chutzpah. Justice Ginsburg argues that the ban will not stop a single abortion, since other methods will be employed, and that it is irrational to distinguish partial-birth abortions from other, equally brutal methods. It is the Supreme Court itself, with Justice Ginsburg's enthusiastic support, that has declared that no state can ban late-term abortions generally. The ban on partial-birth abortion is an attempt to protect life within the narrow confines that the Court has left available. If unborn children cannot be protected in the womb, then at least they can be given some protection when they are partially outside it.

It is true, as Justice Ginsburg says, that it makes no great moral difference whether the child is killed with its feet inside or outside the womb. But the solution is for the Supreme Court to withdraw entirely from abortion policy, a field where it has no constitutional place, and let voters whose moral judgment is superior to Justice Ginsburg's have their say.

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OBITUARY

Patricia Taylor Buckley, R.I.P.

By any standard, at near six feet tall, she was extraordinary. She shared a suite with my sister Trish and two other students at Vassar, and on that spring evening in 1949 I was the blind date she had never met. When I walked into the drawing room the four girls shared, I found her hard pressed. She was mostly ready for the prom but was now vexed by attendant responsibilities. I offered to paint her fingernails, and she immediately extended her hand, using the other one on the telephone. The day before, she had given the sad news to her roommates, that she would not be returning to Vassar for junior and senior years. She was needed at home, in Vancouver, to help her mother care for a dying family member. My own parents had gone to their place in South Carolina for the winter and the house in Sharon, Conn., was closed. But I would dart over from Yale for an occasional weekend in the huge empty house, and Trish brought her there once, and we laughed all weekend long, and Trish promised to visit her in Vancouver during the summer.

At NR's 35th-anniversary dinner

I had a summer job in Calgary working for my father in the oil business, and from there happily flew over to Vancouver to join Trish and Pat for a weekend. Her father's vast house occupied an entire city block, but did not dampen our spirits. On the contrary, the tempo of our congeniality heightened, and on the third day I asked if she would marry me. She rushed upstairs to tell her mother, and I waited at the bottom of the huge staircase hoping to get the temper of her proud mother's reaction (her father was out of town), and soon I heard peals of laughter. I waited apprehensively for Pat to advise me what *that* was all about. The laughter, she revealed, was generated by her mother's taking the occasion to recall that eight times in the past, Pat had reported her betrothal.

One year later, in the company of about a thousand guests, we exchanged vows. Two months after that, we rented a modest house in a suburb of New Haven. Pat resolved to learn how to cook. Her taste was advanced and her ambitions exigent, so she commuted to New York City and learned cooking from experts, becoming one herself. Meanwhile, I taught a class in Spanish to undergraduates and wrote *God and Man at Yale*.

Primarily to avoid exposure to further duty as an infantry officer, I joined the CIA and we went to live in Mexico City, buying and decorating a lovely house in the district of San Angel Inn. Pat was radiant and hyperactive in maintaining the house and its little garden. She resolutely failed to learn the language, even though, until the end, the staff was Spanish-speaking, but intercommunication was electrically effective.

* * *

Her solicitude was such that she opposed any venture by me which she thought might adversely affect me. She opposed the founding of National Review, my signing up with a lecture agency, my non-fiction books and then my fiction books, my contract to write a syndicated column, the projected winter in Switzerland, my decision to run for mayor of New York. Yet once these enterprises were undertaken, she participated enthusiastically. It was she who located the exquisite house, every inch of which she decorated, that we shared for 55 years. We had only one child, Christopher, of whom she was understandably proud. And it was she—all but uniquely she—who brought to this house the legion of guests, of all ages, professions, and interests, whose company made up her lively life.

Her infirmities dated back to a skiing accident in 1965. She went through four hip replacements over the years. She went into the hospital a fortnight ago, but there was no thought of any terminal problem. Yet following an infection, on the seventh day, she died, in the arms of her son.

Friends from everywhere were quick to record their grief. One of them was especially expressive. "Allow a mere acquaintance of your wife to sense the magnitude of your loss. As surely as she physically towered over her surroundings, she must have mentally, spiritually, and luminously surpassed ordinary mortals. She certainly was in every sense of the term *une grande dame*, a distinction she wore as lightly as a T-shirt—not that one can imagine her in anything so plebeian. The only consolation one may offer is that the greatness of a loss is the measure of its antecedent gain. And perhaps also that Pat's memory will be second only to her presence. For as long as you live, people will share with you happy reminiscences that, in their profusion, you may have forgotten or not even known.

"I am a confirmed nonbeliever, but for once I would like to be mistaken, and hope that, for you, this is not goodbye, but *hasta luego*."

No alternative thought would make continuing in life, for me, tolerable.

—WFB

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■ APPRECIATION ■

One of a Kind

Some thoughts on Pat Buckley, 1926–2007

RICHARD BROOKHISER

She and Bill were guests once at my house upstate. They had been driven all the way from Stamford to the eastern Catskills, a long way made longer by a wrong turn. Pat gazed from the backseat, through sunglasses, a King Charles spaniel on her lap. "Are we still in the United States?"

I had a practical question I wanted to pose them, especially her, knowing she was a crack shot. Raccoons get rabies, and I had seen one in the early stages. What would they recommend for varmint control? A shotgun, was the consensus. A while after that, I got a call from Linda Bridges, who had a mysterious package for me at the office. "What does it look like?" I asked her.

"I think it's a gun," she said.

"I think I know why," I said.

It was a .20 gauge, side by side, Spanish, with etchings of pheasants and hunting dogs, and a set of initials: PTB.

Mr. Brookhiser is an NR senior editor.

JACK FOWLER

From the perspective of an NR functionary, she was the boss's wife, yes, but she was also an independent, larger-than-life force. One memory: A few years ago, at a reception, she demanded that I join her in some merry conversation with Barbara Walters and Nancy Kissinger—and hanging with the doyennes is not exactly something a Bronx schlub would ever have imagined himself doing.

But my own dealings with Pat are irrelevant. What is relevant is that Pat let—and helped—her equally larger-than-life husband undertake the monumental task of launching a massive political movement that played a central role in bringing freedom to millions of tyrannized people.

Mr. Fowler is publisher of National Review.

EVAN GALBRAITH

In the spring of 1950, Bill had Pat Taylor for a weekend at Yale, and I invited them to dinner at a fraternity, DKE. Pat had a bad impression of fraternities, and once seated she looked around and said, "I hear everyone around here is drunk half the time." I demurred: "Oh no, we drink twice that much." She roared with laughter and grabbed my hand, saying, "We'll get along just fine!"

Pat Taylor Buckley was humor. Later that summer in Vancouver at their sumptuous wedding, Pat worried that some of us Yalie ushers might not show up sober and she had her mother issue an order to the ushers: "No Nips before Nups." Violators would be seized and pressed into the Canadian army and sent to Korea. Pat's father was a very big wheel and we all believed he could do it. We all laughed for years, on land and at sea, over "No Nips before Nups."

Pat's humor was like mother's milk to her friends.

Mr. Galbraith is Defense Department representative in Europe and defense adviser to the U.S. mission to NATO.

JEFF GREENFIELD

My first television experience was as a panelist on *Firing Line*, and in that role I was invited to come to London in 1969 for a few of the show's tapings. That was the first time I met Pat, who seemed to me a larger-than-life figure, someone who inhabited a world I had only seen thumbing through newspapers and magazines. But the more times I met her, the more I came to believe that, for all of the *presence* she brought with her into every room she entered, she viewed much of life with a twinkle in the eye.

One day I offered Bill a fine Havana cigar—to avoid political offense, I invited him to slowly burn the agricultural export of a dictatorship—and heard Pat declaim, "Bill, you're *not* going to smoke one of those dreadful *Communist cigars*, are you?" I do not think I imagined her capacity to savor the life she led, while avoiding the trap of taking its trappings too seriously.

And oh, yes: Her love for Bill, and his for her, was also a presence in every room they occupied together.

Mr. Greenfield is senior political correspondent for CBS News.

JOSEPH LIEBERMAN

She was an accomplished woman in many ways, but I would not say that street politics was necessarily one of them. Yet she made an exception that mattered much to me. During my first campaign for Senate in 1988, I benefited greatly from Bill's formation of "BuckPac." And I can vividly remember Pat as a dedicated foot-soldier standing outside a supermarket or two in Stamford handing out BuckPac literature, and in her own grand manner of speech, making the case for the Buckley family's candidate for the Senate. Since I was elected that year by less than 1 percent of the vote, it is quite possible that Bill and Pat's efforts made the difference!

A great friend, a dedicated mother, and a loving wife, Pat will be missed by all who came into contact with her.

Mr. Lieberman is a senator from Connecticut.

RICHARD LOWRY

Like most young NR staffers, I was very daunted by Pat Buckley when I first met her. She was such a grand figure. As I got to know her better, I came to appreciate the twinkle in her eye. You had to be on your toes at the editorial dinners she hosted. But one of my favorite things was when she would direct an acerbic remark

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someone's way and he would find the perfect comeback and Pat would dissolve in laughter. When Pat wasn't at the dinners, they weren't the same—something special had been taken out of them. And so it will be in NR's life generally now that she's gone.

Pat often inhabited a world of high society many of us aren't familiar with, but we all had something profound in common with her, since she loved NR and loved Bill Buckley.

Mr. Lowry is editor of National Review.

JAY NORDLINGER

I liked it when she twinkled, and I liked it when she smiled—and she did a lot of both. I also liked it when she dished and opined and generally performed.

You were simply glad you knew her. She made a million quotable comments, provided a million tellable stories. You could draw on them forever (and I intend to). She could be stormy, and she could be pure, warm sunshine. Her capacity for love, and the expression of it, was great. She poured on the love when you needed it most.

The day after she departed, someone very close to her sent me a note, reading, "She was Something." And that capital S was absolutely right. It also occurs to me that she was fond of crossword puzzles, and there is a word used only in crossword puzzles (to my knowledge): "oner." It means unique, one-of-a-kind. It certainly fits.

What can you say besides you loved her and you'll never forget her? She would often say to me, "I'll call you tomorrow." That was a regular signoff: "I'll call you tomorrow." She won't be calling me, not on the telephone, but, baby, I'll remember.

Mr. Nordlinger is managing editor of National Review.

JOHN O'SULLIVAN

Before I met Pat Buckley, I had been told two things about her: first that she was extremely glamorous, second that she was one of the leaders of New York society. Both were true. Pat had the kind of tall slender figure that flattered the designer gowns she wore, and her name (plus Bill's) was at the top of every important list for parties and charity balls in the city.

When I finally did meet her, I wondered that someone so candid and witty could have flourished in social circles where self-importance was not unknown. Her wit and candor, I soon realized, made her wonderfully invigorating company. New Yorkers liked someone who could beat them at their own games of verbal dexterity.

Pat's social leadership was more than merely social, however. Conservatives were rare in such circles. Pat may have been more conservative than Bill—at one time she had a Buchanan bumper sticker

on her car. Together they were conservatism's golden couple, giving a contemporary Manhattan gloss to a movement that its enemies would like to have caricatured as provincial, dull, and outdated.

Pat was also a loving wife and mother, a loyal friend, and active in many charitable causes. Those are, I tell myself, the important things. Then I remember the many NR dinners to which she welcomed guests of every opinion with style, generosity, and haute cuisine—and I cannot help feeling that the witty glamour girl may have done more for conservatism than a thousand well-written editorials.

Mr. O'Sullivan is an NR editor-at-large.

NORMAN PODHORETZ

Pat Buckley was obviously a great lady in the usual sense of that term, but she was also something better than that—one of the very few truly great women I have been lucky enough to know in my by now rather long lifetime. Beautiful, it goes without saying; regal in stature and bearing, certainly; clever almost to a fault, yes; and intelligent to the highest degree. All this was infused with a vitality that imparted a special radiance to her presence, an iridescent aura in which you bathed whenever you got near her. It was so powerful that it could hardly be dimmed even when, in the last few years, she grew crotchety and, if truth be told, even a bit cantankerous, from the constant pain from which she has now been delivered. But for those of us who admired and loved her and who know that we will never look upon her like again, there is no deliverance: There is only the selfish heartbreak at being robbed of so rich a giver of delights.

Mr. Podhoretz is editor-at-large of *Commentary*.

WILLIAM A. RUSHER

The news prompted two quite diverse reflections. The first was the memory of Pat's many quiet kindnesses. Indeed, "quiet" is hardly an adequate word; "secret" might be better. In any case, they were wonderful. By pure chance, I learned that she had visited one friend every day for the last two weeks of his life, as it ebbed away owing to a mortal illness. To be there when you really needed her: That was Pat.

The other reflection was of how stoically she bore up under the various medical problems that afflicted her. I cannot think of anyone else I know who, over a span of many years, suffered a worse series of seemingly gratuitous injuries. She complained, of course, though often lacing the complaints with a dry wit that was virtually her signature. But, to the admiration of her many friends, she soldiered on.

The mutual love of Bill and Pat is one of the great untold stories of our time. As his friends draw even closer to Bill today, we can only imagine the enormity of his loss.

Mr. Rusher is a former publisher of National Review and a syndicated columnist.

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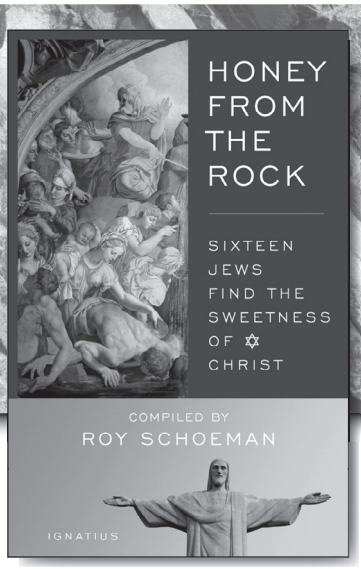

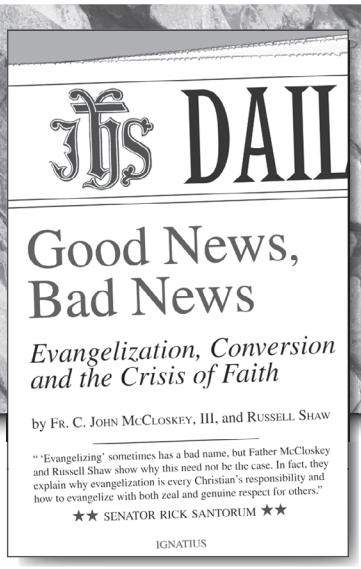
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■ POLITICS ■

The Louisiana Wunderkind

Beholding Rep. Bobby Jindal

JOHN J. MILLER

'When my dad sat you down and said that you had 'a lot of potential'—that was not a good speech," says Rep. Bobby Jindal, a Louisiana Republican. "It meant that you weren't working hard enough."

It's difficult to imagine anybody accusing Jindal of not working hard enough. His life story so far—he's 35—is a tale of potential realized. The son of immigrant parents from India, Jindal went to Brown and earned a Rhodes scholarship. At the age of 24, he became the head of Louisiana's Health and Hospitals Department. At 26, he ran a national commission on Medicare. At 28, he became president of the University of Louisiana system. Jindal also served as an assistant secretary of health and human services in the Bush administration and, in 2004, was elected to Congress. He was reelected last year.

Is that good enough, Father Jindal?

The only blemish on this GOP whiz kid's résumé came in 2003, when he ran for governor of his home state and lost by four points to Democrat Kathleen Blanco. Then came Hurricane Katrina, which laid waste not only to New Orleans but also to Blanco's reputation as a leader. On March 20, she announced that she would not seek reelection.

Today, Jindal is the most popular politician in Louisiana—and he's a strong favorite to win the votes for Blanco's vacated seat from an electorate that's experiencing a profound case of buyer's remorse. An April poll gave him a favorability rating of 67 percent, with only 13 percent viewing him unfavorably. Other surveys have showed Jindal clobbering all potential opponents, including former senator John Breaux, a Democrat who recently flirted with running but ultimately declined. Many believe that Jindal will win an outright majority on October 20, when Louisiana voters go to the polls for their famous open primary, and avoid a two-candidate runoff currently scheduled for November 17.

The Jindal juggernaut is welcome news for a Republican party that's haunted by last year's congressional disaster and worried about another debacle in next year's presidential contest. If future historians write accounts of the GOP's collapse in 2006 and 2008, they will probably place the botched response to Katrina near the center of their narrative. That may have been the moment when the tide of public opinion turned decisively against the Bush administration and Republican governance. Yet Louisiana voters are on the verge of complicating this simple storyline. Instead of conforming to a national trend, they're preparing to buck it—and advance the career of one of the most impressive young conservatives in the country.

Jindal has bucked trends from the start. In high school, he abandoned his parents' Hindu faith and became a Christian. In college, he converted to Catholicism—not exactly a the hippest thing to do on an Ivy League campus. At Brown, the student body was so left-of-center that there wasn't even a chapter of College Republicans. "I was told that the conservatives were the College Democrats," says Jindal. So he started a Republican group that survives to this day. The experience in Providence toughened Jindal: "I was just about the only person who was pro-life, the only person who thought Ronald Reagan was a good president. Believe me, anybody who leaves Brown as a conservative has had his beliefs tested."

One summer, Jindal worked on Capitol Hill as an intern. About a week into his job with Rep. Jim McCrery, Jindal asked for more substantive work. "I thought, 'Oh boy, an eager-beaver college student,'" says McCrery, a Louisiana Republican. "I told him to write a paper on how to improve Medicare. I figured that would keep him busy and I wouldn't see him again." Just before the internship ended, however, Jindal dropped a thick manuscript on McCrery's desk. "It was an excellent piece of work," says McCrery. "It identified problems, discussed budgetary implications, and suggested reforms."

That contact helped Jindal land his first

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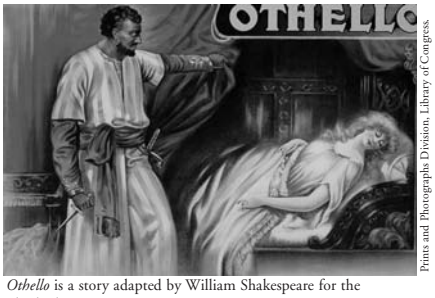

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Professor Clare R. Kinney is an Associate Professor of English at the University of Virginia. She received her B.A. in English at Cambridge University and her Ph.D. at Yale University. Professor Kinney has published *Strategies of Poetic Narrative: Chaucer*, *Spenser*, *Milton*, *Eliot*, and many articles and essays on Shakespeare, Edmund Spenser, Chaucer, and other Renaissance and medieval authors. She recently received the University of Virginia All-University Teaching Award.

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big job in government. In 1995, Jindal was working as a management consultant in Washington, and voters in Louisiana were getting ready to elect a governor. The young man phoned his old boss. Would McCrery help him become Louisiana's next health secretary? The congressman asked his 24-year-old caller whether he would consider something a little more junior, such as assistant secretary. No thanks, said Jindal. McCrery promised to make an inquiry or two. To the amazement of everybody except perhaps Jindal, Gov. Mike Foster hired the wunderkind. Jindal was put in charge of an agency that consumed about 40 percent of the state's budget. In two years, he wiped out a $400 million deficit.

When people talk about Jindal, the word they most commonly use to describe him is "brilliant." He's no intellectual showoff, but in conversations about policy he quickly displays a mastery of detail. Ask him a slightly wonky question and he often begins his reply by saying, "Let me make three points . . ." The downside is that these rapid-fire monologues can seem robotic. "Some people say, 'Bobby talks faster than I can think,'" says former GOP congressman Bob Livingston, a supporter of Jindal's. It's easy to see how this habit might turn off voters, though by most accounts Jindal has learned to slow down and is a much-improved retail politician as compared with four years ago, when he was the Baton Rouge brainiac whose name had never before appeared on a ballot.

Democrats have done their best to portray Jindal (rhymes with "kindle") as an alien in Cajun country. Shortly before the election in 2003, a New Orleans *Times-Picayune* reporter overheard Blanco complain to a fellow Democratic candidate about Jindal, "A Hindu out-Catholic'd both of us." Nowadays, the state party puts out press releases that refer to Jindal as "Piyush 'Bobby' Jindal." That's because his legal name is Piyush. Since he was four years old, however, he has gone by Bobby. According to family lore, he picked up the nickname after watching an episode of *The Brady Bunch*. When I called the Louisiana Democratic party to ask why it insists on calling him Piyush when virtually nobody else does, communications director Julie Vezinot explained the reasoning: "He wants to portray himself as one thing, as a wonder boy, but he's not done wonders. We portray him as he truly is, and he's truly Piyush Jindal."

Democratic portrayals of Jindal have raised eyebrows before. Four years ago, a last-minute television commercial for Blanco flashed a controversial picture of Jindal and warned, "Wake up Louisiana! Before it's too late!" The ad outraged Republicans. "They showed Bobby to be darker than he really is, with his hair messed up even though his hair is never messed up—they made him look like Don King," says McCrery. "It was a racist ad." When the votes were counted, Jindal lost in part because he underperformed among white voters in the northern part of the state, where Republicans traditionally have done well.

If Jindal wins this fall, he'll become the first non-white governor of Louisiana since P. B. S. Pinchback, the son of a freed slave who held the office for 35 days in the 1870s. Although many will see this as a sign of progress in multiracial America, some pundits will attribute a Jindal victory to Louisiana's post-Katrina demography—and specifically to the reduced number of heavily Democratic black voters. "Things have shifted less than some people think," counters Greg Rigamer, a consultant who worked for Blanco four years ago but this time is with Jindal. Many people who left New Orleans, for instance, didn't leave the state and they'll still vote. Some who did leave the state probably wouldn't have voted anyway. The bottom line, according to Rigamer, is that there will be perhaps 40,000 fewer black voters this year, in a race that probably will see 1.6 million ballots cast. That's about 2.5 percent. Will it matter? "If Jindal wins by less than 50,000 votes, then it will be possible to say that Katrina gave him a more favorable electorate," concludes Rigamer.

Right now, it looks like Jindal will win by more than that. Republicans are talking about 2007 as a year of realignment in Louisiana—capturing not only the governorship, but also the state house for the first time since the Civil War. (The state senate is expected to remain in Democratic hands.) "I'm hopeful about seeing a whole new wave of fresh faces in the legislature," says Sen. David Vitter, a Louisiana Republican. As a state representative a dozen years ago, Vitter authored a term-limits bill that begins to take effect only now, meaning that there are an unusually large number of open seats this year. Republicans are also optimistic about beating Democratic senator Mary Landrieu in 2008. From a national perspective, she is probably the GOP's top takeover target.

Those are ambitious plans. The first step is to guarantee Jindal's successful election—and there are few sure things in politics. "The race will be no fun for Jindal," says one GOP pollster. "Louisiana Republicans don't win statewide by the margins he currently appears to have. He's going to spend the next few months watching his lead drop, but I would be stunned if somebody else actually won." Jindal is currently taking a play-it-safe approach, waiting until this summer before offering a comprehensive platform. And nobody needs to remind him that, in 2003, the polls showed him running ahead of Blanco right up to Election Day.

Maybe now would be a good time for Jindal's father to remind his son that he's still got an awful lot of potential. **NR**

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■ PUBLIC POLICY

About to Burst

Taxes and spending will soon go crazy

RAMESH PONNURU

TAXES are going to go up. That's not a prediction about what the Democratic Congress is going to do about President Bush's tax cuts. Even if they make all of those tax cuts permanent, taxes are still going to go up—automatically, with no vote by the Congress. Spending is going to go up, too—way up. Conservatives have no plan to solve these problems. They don't seem to be aware that the tax problem even exists.

The major reason taxes are going to go up is that our tax code gives the government a disproportionate share of the proceeds from economic growth. As the economy grows, people move into higher tax brackets. So average tax rates go up.

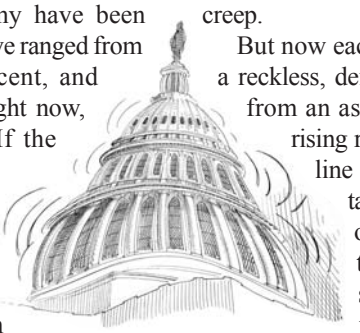
Actually, you don't even need to move into a higher tax bracket to end up paying higher average tax rates. Let's say we had a flat tax of 17 percent on all income above $15,000. Let's say you get a raise from $25,000 to $30,000. Before the raise, you paid $1,700 in taxes, 6.8 percent of your income. Afterward, you pay $2,550, or 8.5 percent.

This kind of "bracket creep" is more benign than the old kind. In the late 1970s, taxpayers found that inflation was putting them in higher tax brackets. Even when they were not making any more money in real terms, the government was taking more from them, thus leaving taxpayers poorer than they had been. One of President Reagan's major accomplishments on taxes was to make tax brackets automatically increase with inflation.

When raises, rather than inflation, fuel bracket creep, individual taxpayers still come out ahead. But the percentage that the government takes out of the economy creeps upward without a vote. In 2005, the Congressional Budget Office issued a report that touched on the subject: "Under current law, taxpayers will face higher rates, with detrimental consequences for work, saving and economic growth."

The more painful, inflation-driven variety of bracket creep hasn't completely gone away, either. Every year, more people are paying the Alternative Minimum Tax, originally designed to make sure that fat cats couldn't use tax breaks to wipe out all or most of their tax liability. If the regular tax code generated too low a tax liability, these rich taxpayers would have to pay the AMT instead. But the AMT does not take account of inflation or economic growth, so it counts more and more taxpayers among the rich. And so the government's tax take rises even more by the year.

Over the last 50 years, federal revenues as a share of the economy have been remarkably stable. They have ranged from 16.1 percent to 20.9 percent, and averaged 18.5 percent. Right now, they're at 18.4 percent. If the Bush tax cuts expire and brackets are allowed to keep creeping, however, taxes as a percent of GDP will rise to 23.7 percent by 2050. Never in American history—in war or peace—has the tax burden been so high.



The spending side of the story is more familiar. Social Security is the easiest example to understand. As wages grow in the economy, so do benefit levels. Someone who retires now after making an average U.S. income throughout his working life will get $15,400 in Social Security benefits this year. An average-wage worker who retires in 2050 is expected to get a first-year benefit of $22,200 (adjusted to today's dollars for inflation). Benefits, that is, are expected to rise 44 percent. Since the proportion of retirees will increase for decades, total spending on Social Security will go up even faster.

Medicare will grow faster still: Healthcare costs have outpaced the economy for decades. Put these trends on auto-pilot, and the federal government will become a program to send money from young people to old people. The federal government spends 4.2 percent of the country's yearly income on Medicare and Medicaid. Assume that the cost of those programs grows at its historical rate, and the federal government would have to devote 22 percent of the economy to paying for those two programs by 2050. That's a larger figure than the federal government spends today on everything it funds.

On both the spending and tax sides, then, the system is geared toward bigger government. The goalposts keep moving away from us. If conservatives propose that the Social Security benefits of 2040 be kept to today's levels plus inflation, liberals can accuse them, somewhat reasonably, of imposing "steep cuts"—44 percent cuts—in the program. To keep tax revenues stable as a share of the economy, conservatives would have to enact substantial tax cuts repeatedly. That's what we did during the last few decades, which is why federal revenues stayed roughly flat as a share of the economy despite bracket creep.

But now each tax cut is presented as a reckless, deficit-expanding departure from an assumed baseline of ever-rising revenues. The rising baseline for spending also makes tax cuts look more dangerous: If spending "obligations" are going to rise so much, the government will find it harder and harder to part with the money. In other words, Washington assumes it will get more and spend more as a matter of course.

People who follow the debates over fiscal policy closely will have run into the claim, from liberals, that "reversing the Bush tax cuts would fully pay for the Social Security shortfall." That is true only in a misleading technical sense. The Social Security system has IOUs from the rest of the government. The liberals who make this argument aren't counting those IOUs as part of the shortfall. But the government will still have to find some way to pay them off. More important, the argument doesn't assume that we go back to the level of federal revenues, as a share of GDP, that prevailed right before Bush's tax cuts. It assumes, rather, that we let bracket creep plus the reversal of those tax cuts carry us to historically unprecedented levels of taxation.

The problem I am describing is a political one, and thus something of a luxury: Wage growth is clearly preferable to wage stagnation, even if it leads to higher tax

ROMAN GENN

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rates and Social Security payments. For conservatives, however, the political problem is likely to be quite severe.

A few conservatives have more or less explicitly surrendered to the spending trends. They say that the government has a moral obligation to meet all of its promises of future benefits, even if it does not seem to have the wherewithal to do so, and have tried to design various convoluted "conservative" plans to raise the money. These plans generally assume that mild free-market reforms can generate wealth sufficient to make up for gigantic shortfalls.

But there really is no good argument for tax and entitlement policies that generate constantly, mindlessly growing government. Fixing the tax side of the problem is conceptually easy. The Alternative Minimum Tax could be indexed for inflation or, better, scrapped. The regular tax code could be indexed not only for inflation but for economic growth. But the government is now so dependent on the assumption of quickly rising revenues that it would be enormously difficult to enact any such fixes. They would be much more "expensive" than the Bush tax cuts were.

Alternatively, you could try to impose uniformity: If tax brackets are going to be indexed to inflation alone, so too should spending programs. Social Security benefit levels could be made to rise with prices rather than with wages. That policy would eliminate the Social Security shortfall entirely. (It would be trickier to slow Medicare's growth the same way.)

In the real world, we're not likely to get a solution quite so clean. But it is worth keeping this background in mind when considering proposed deals, or the possibility of making a deal at all, on entitlements and taxes. Conservatives have generally been hostile to the idea of striking a deal with Democrats, because they know that a deal will probably involve tax increases. And it is true that a deal that causes taxes to rise even more than they already will is unlikely to be worth making. But we should also remember that the absence of a deal does not protect us from tax increases: It guarantees them. As things stand, conservatives are set to lose the political battles over limited government for the next generation, before they have even fired a shot. **NR**

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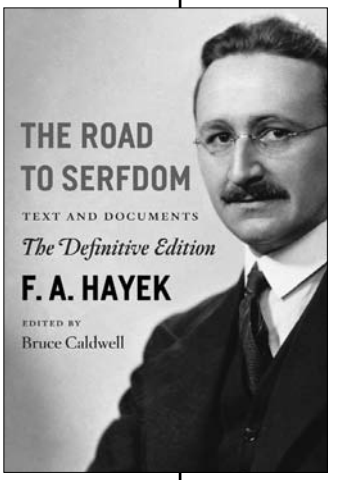

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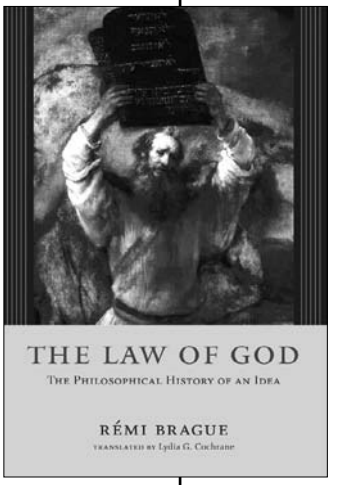

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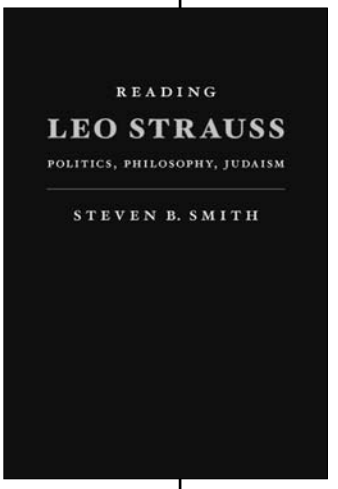

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■ AT WAR

Axis über Alles?

Bush is not dealing adequately with Iran and North Korea

JASON LEE STEORTS

To his credit, President Bush is not the type to say *raison d'être* out loud, but he nonetheless gave one to his administration in the 2002 State of the Union address. Having summarized the intolerable threats that arise when terrorists, rogue regimes, and weapons of mass destruction intersect, and having christened Iraq, Iran, North Korea, and their like the "Axis of Evil," Bush made a pledge: "The United States of America will not permit the world's most dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world's most destructive weapons."

That resolution—forged in the flames of September 11 and tempered by the realization that there are far deadlier weapons than jetliners—has been the central mission of Bush's presidency. It subsumes even the Iraq War, whose first and best justification was that a regime as dangerous as Saddam Hussein's could not be allowed to exist if it did not verifiably renounce the pursuit of WMD. Bush can fall short on any number of goals and still reckon his presidency a success. But if his nonproliferation efforts fail, so does he, full stop.

Five years on, how goes the fight? North Korea has tested an atomic bomb; Iran is steadily increasing the size of its uranium-enrichment operation; and the "international community," if not quite an assembly of eunuchs, is doing its best to look like one. We should not fall into the distinctly unconservative error of supposing that every problem has a solution. It may be that, in vowing to defang Iran and North Korea, Bush set an unattainable goal. But we are right to ask whether he is doing everything possible to achieve this goal: and the answer to that question must be no.

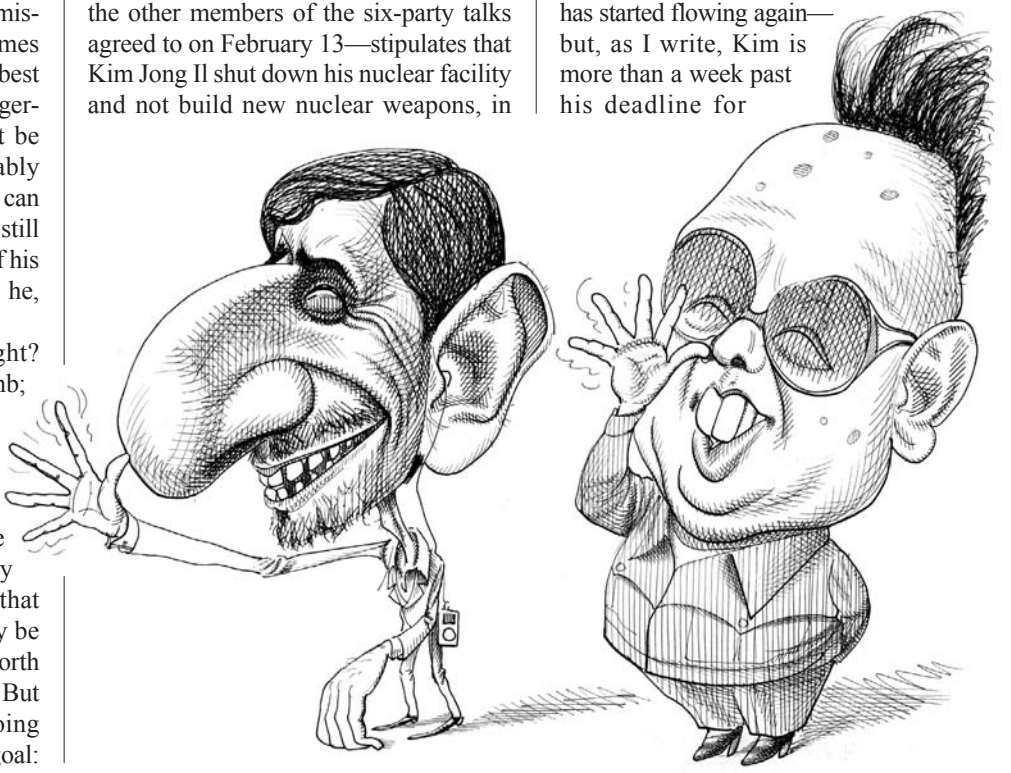
It is not my answer only, but that of several persons currently or formerly associated with President Bush's national-security team. None wished to speak on the record, and most declined even to be quoted anonymously. But a single theme emerged in these conversations, and it is that President Bush's nonproliferation agenda is in freefall.

To understand why, ask first what Bush's immediate objective with regard to Iran and North Korea should be. The answer, in a word, is pressure. Commentators debate endlessly whether the U.S. should try to change the Iranian and North Korean regimes, or simply their behavior. But these goals are not mutually exclusive. Up to a point, they are even complementary. Both are advanced by the more basic strategy of forcing Iran and North Korea to pay the highest possible price for their misconduct. Such punishment may lead them to conclude that seeking weapons of mass destruction is not in their interest, in which case they will reform themselves. If not, punitive measures will at least weaken their regimes, both of which are already highly unstable.

The deal that the Bush administration negotiated with North Korea—and which the other members of the six-party talks agreed to on February 13—stipulates that Kim Jong Il shut down his nuclear facility and not build new nuclear weapons, in exchange for massive economic aid and the eventual normalization of relations with the U.S. This is the sort of thing that makes hearts skip a beat in international-relations courses, but if the goal was to reduce Kim's threat then the United States should never have set pen to paper.

Prior to the deal, the pressure on Kim was considerable. His regime has escaped financial ruin only through a combination of arms sales, black-market businesses (principally counterfeiting and drug-trafficking), and foreign aid. This last source of income had been significantly choked off as Kim's neighbors suspended aid shipments in response to his provocations. As for the second, the United States had won an important battle in 2005 when it sanctioned the Banco Delta Asia for abetting North Korea's counterfeiting operation. These sanctions deprived North Korea of $25 million in an account with the bank; more important, they effectively shut North Korea out of the international financial system, as banks around the world suddenly refused to have dealings with it. Security Council Resolution 1718 froze additional North Korean assets, further straitening Kim's conditions.

The February 13 deal has entirely dissipated these pressures. Kim's $25 million has been unfrozen and the aid has started flowing again—but, as I write, Kim is more than a week past his deadline for



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shutting down the nuclear facility at Yongbyon. Probably he intends to close it eventually, since doing so will entitle him to massive energy assistance. China—the North's most important source of material aid and diplomatic cover—has put its credibility on the line, and will presumably exert what leverage it can to make Kim comply. But the nasty truth about the deal is that even full compliance gives the U.S. very little. Kim still owns a nuclear arsenal, since the agreement punts final disposition of that matter to the day when the lion lies down with the lamb. Our only assurance that North Korea will not build more nukes is the word of a liar (recall that Kim promised to give up his nuclear program once before, in 1994). And the deal puts a straitjacket on the United States: We will be reluctant, for example, to interdict a North Korean arms shipment, since Kim might well scuttle the agreement in retaliation. This triumph of diplomacy has only one certain outcome, and that is to make life easier for the Hermit King.

This is not just bad policy; it is bad precedent. It announces to any would-be proliferator that a country possessed of atomic bombs can defy the United States and claim a reward for its defiance. Iran's rulers must have analyzed the deal with particular interest—though they perhaps learned nothing that the U.S. hadn't already demonstrated by abasing itself before the "EU-3" over the past three and a half years.

The logic of tying our Iran policy to that of Britain, France, and Germany has never been obvious. In North Korea's case, multilateralism made sense. North Korea is a weak state surrounded by strong ones, and these neighbors have an interest in keeping its psychoses in check. The six-party talks were an attempt to unite them in a common front against Kim—and, right up until the deal, the plan seemed to be working. Iran, by contrast, is a strong state among weak neighbors. With the possible exception of Israel, they can do little to check its hegemonic impulses. Europe is almost equally useless. France and Germany have strong commercial ties with Iran, and the British people slumber in post-Iraq pacifism. All this has led the EU-3 to greet each new advance in Iran's nuclear program with a collective shrug. By outsourcing his Iran policy to Europe, Bush guaranteed that negotiations would drag on interminably while producing almost no pressure on the Iranian regime. The fruits of his decision have been, first, two toothless Security Council resolutions, and second, complete obscuration of the threat of force.

This is not to say that military strikes are desirable, or that negotiations should not have been attempted. But a clear threat of force—coupled with an expiration date on diplomacy—could have put enormous pressure on the Iranian regime. At a minimum, Bush should have pushed much more forcefully to wrap up dealings in the Security Council by 2004 (two full years after the revelation of Iran's nuclear program). Even if he never intended to order air strikes against Iran's nuclear facilities, this would have allowed the U.S. and its allies to focus earlier and more directly on containing the Iranian threat and subverting the Iranian regime. Instead, Bush's tolerance for delay has given the mullahs time to perfect their centrifuge cascades as they run out the clock on his presidency.

Just why Bush has retreated so markedly from the positions he articulated in 2002 is not clear. But if the answer has a name, it is probably Condi. According to one close observer of the administration, Condoleezza Rice "has become the witting captive of the bureaucracy she heads" and takes "the Foreign Service perspective, the State institutional perspective, back to the president." A second observer agrees: "The answer to everything is Condi." She has "complete dominance over the process, greater I would say even than Kissinger during the collapse of the Nixon administration and under Ford." Such dominance would not be possible if the president heard strong alternative views, but the National Security Council—where he normally would hear them—is "completely neutered." According to the first observer, national security adviser Stephen Hadley "is hardwired genetically to seek deals, and has shown absolutely no indication that the substance of the deals matters to him one iota."

In the end, why Bush is making bad decisions is of secondary importance. What matters is that he is—and the Axis of Evil is winning. **NR**

■ THE NATION

Madness at Virginia Tech

Doing nothing about the kid behind the sunglasses

RICHARD LOWRY

NIKKI GIOVANNI, a Virginia Tech English professor, is an African-American poetess of the Maya Angelou school. At a memorial service after the slaughter of 32 people, she compared the shootings to a "baby elephant watching his community be devastated for ivory," and to a baby dying in Appalachia when his house is "run over by a boulder because the land was destabilized."

Judging by those comparisons, she certainly believes more than her share of liberal hokum and is definitely not the "judgmental" type. But she reacted the way any commonsensical person would when the non-responsive, sunglass-wearing Seung-Hui Cho was in one of her classes—she demanded that he be removed. On CNN's *Larry King Live*, she said, "And I did what I should do, which was tell my supervisor he's got to go or I'm going to resign." So far, so good.

Then she went on to explain that it wasn't "obvious" that Cho was dangerously disturbed, although "he did ugly things" and Giovanni was notionally ready to resign rather than be in the same room with him. "You can't just go plucking them out because they may do something," she said of students with problems. She professed even to consider it a kind of risk to insist that he leave her class: "What if he had graduated and become something really wonderful and all of a sudden he's got a Nobel Prize and it's like yes, and Dr. Giovanni kicked me out of class?"

King asked her whether she flunked Cho, a reasonable question given that—besides his non-participation in class and bizarre behavior—his work was not poetry, "nowhere near it." Of course she didn't.

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Cho instead got one-on-one tutoring from the head of the English department.

After any such horrific rampage there will be analysis of the "warning signs," and why they were missed. It is always easier to see them after the fact, obviously, and we shouldn't pretend that every terrible event is avoidable with just enough keen sensitivity to the right information. Awful things happen in this broken world. But Seung-Hui Cho represents a case of a systemized failure to heed signs of madness and to insist that it be treated.

"There was nothing we could do," was the universal mantra after the shootings. This helplessness is not an ineluctable truth, but the product of a choice we made as a society about 30 years ago, to deinstitutionalize the mentally ill and to make their treatment largely contingent on their own free choice. Of course, relying on their rational decision-making is dubious in the extreme, since they have disturbed minds or they wouldn't be mentally ill in the first place.

Cho was not simply odd or eccentric, as people sometimes characterize him when arguing, "What are we going to do, kick all the weird people out of school?" He displayed classic symptoms of paranoid schizophrenia. He had an imaginary girlfriend, who he told his roommates lived in outer space and traveled by spaceship. He once told a roommate to stay away because she was in the room with him. He also maintained that he had gone on vacation with Vladimir Putin in North Carolina.

When his "poetry" was read aloud in Giovanni's class, it was so terrifying that at the next meeting of the class only seven of 70 students showed up. When the department head began to tutor him, she established a secret code word with her assistant to signal when she should call security. Another alarmed professor went to her dean with worries about Cho. She was told that nothing could be done, so he was simply placed off to the side of the seminar, where he said nothing and his disturbing writings weren't read aloud.

This is a microcosm of how we've handled many of the mentally ill over the past 30 years, when they have been left to their own devices—and often to the streets or prison—rather than treated.

There are many reasons for the great deinstitutionalization and the concomitant tightening of commitment laws: a reaction to legitimate abuses, the rise of more effective drugs, budget cuts, expanded conceptions of civil rights, an influential anti-psychiatry movement. But another intellectual current behind the trend was a moral disempowerment of sanity.

One of the most influential academics of the late 20th century, Michel Foucault, argued that attempts to label and treat madness were inherently arbitrary and repressive. Foucault celebrated the insane 19th-century French murderer Pierre Rivière as, in the words of Foucault's biographer James Miller, "a 'tragic' hero—just like Sade, or Artaud. His murders, like his memoirs, were an admirable work of art."

In a less extreme fashion, academia has been celebrating "transgression" ever since. Any attempt to romanticize madness has an incontrovertible answer, however, in Seung-Hui Cho. This is what madness truly is: lonely, painful, shattering, and (especially if untreated) potentially murderous. After seeing the trail of misery left by such transgression, can we expend some of the same intellectual energy honoring wholesome normality?

Behind some of the plaints of Virginia Tech staff that nothing could be done about Cho, you can hear the undercurrent: Who were we to judge? Of course, if he had occasionally uttered racial slurs rather than frightening those around him with his violent rants and strange behavior, the full apparatus of administrative power at Virginia Tech would have been brought down on him.

In fairness, Virginia Tech was in a tough spot. Any move when dealing with a troubled student can lead to a lawsuit: If you remove him, he could sue; if you let him stay and he hurts himself or others—someone else will sue. Just last year, George Washington University was sued and pilloried in the press after putting a suicidally depressed student on interim involuntary leave. A professor at Oakland University in Michigan wrote an op-ed in the *New York Times* about how for the longest time she couldn't do anything about a student who slept in a lab across the hall from her and pasted a live cockroach on her door as a "gift."

Virginia Tech also had to cope with Virginia's extremely strict commitment law, which requires that someone represent an "imminent danger" to himself or others before he can be compelled to seek treatment. Virginia hasn't caught up to other states that have begun to recover from the excesses of deinstitutionalization and have made it easier to compel treatment. A Virginia judge ruled in 2005 that Cho met even this strict standard. He was ordered to get a psychiatric evaluation and to get treatment, but nothing came of it.

Choice has become such gospel that it overrides even the letter of the law. Dr. E. Fuller Torrey, president of the Treatment Advocacy Center, writes,

> [Virginia's] law says the local mental-health agency shall monitor the person's compliance with treatment. And yet, when asked, a spokesman for the agency that should have helped Cho said, "The matter of the individual actually following up and going to that appointment is his or her prerogative." Not just untrue, but ridiculous. He also said that the court order "can't actually be enforced," despite the fact that the law says that upon failure to adhere to the treatment order, the judge can rescind it and order hospitalization.

Less than two years after the judge's ruling on Cho, the worst happened. According to an extensive survey in the *New York Times* a few years ago, about half of rampage killings are committed by mentally ill people, a much higher percentage than the roughly 5 percent of all murders for which the mentally ill are responsible. Torrey believes there has been a rise in such killings in recent decades—the period when we have dumped untreated severely mentally ill people out into society.

There is, of course, a balance to be struck between civil liberties and mandatory treatment. But that balance is now badly off-kilter, and serves no one well—not the person suffering from mental illness, or his relatives and loved ones who can't get him help, or his victims, should he turn violent. Seung-Hui Cho was basically abandoned to his private mental hell at Virginia Tech. While he hatched his lunatic and hateful plot, everyone tried to ignore the scary guy sitting silently in class behind the sunglasses. **NR**

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■ ESSAY

Flawed Liberator

What's right and wrong in President Bush's freedom crusade

MICHAEL KNOX BERAN

PRESIDENT BUSH's confidence in the worldwide appeal of free institutions is now all but universally regarded as naïve. The president's detractors ridicule as "Bush babble" the rhetoric of his Second Inaugural Address, the high-water mark of his Freevangelical policy; and, as distressing news pours forth from Iraq, they point to his claim that "eventually the call of freedom comes to every mind and every soul" as evidence that he suffers acutely from a Messiah complex.

The criticism misses the mark. America was founded on a messianic idea; and whether John Winthrop was right or wrong when he crossed the ocean to build a city on a hill, it is too late now to abandon the visionary business. Nor is it evident that we need, or ought to. The convictions the president expressed in his Second Inaugural Address, utopian though they may be, have often, by a paradox that deserves but has never received careful study, inspired sound and pragmatic diplomacy. No, if Mr. Bush has gone wrong, his error lies, not in his adherence to a Freevangelical faith that Lincoln, FDR, Truman, and Reagan all shared, but rather in the methods by which he has tried to implement that faith—methods strikingly similar to those that brought two of his less happy predecessors, Woodrow Wilson and Lyndon B. Johnson, to grief.

I.

The error of President Wilson was to exalt the technical machinery of democracy—the plebiscite and the ballot box—and to overlook the *demos* itself, its hopes and its hatreds, all those apparently primitive, pathological impulses that do not fit neatly into a chart of *Homo sapiens* progress, but that are abundantly evident wherever actual human beings are gathered. Wilson, who had been bred a Calvinist, *ought* to have had a less pedantic idea of human nature. But he was also a Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins, and he had been influenced by the 19th-century faith in social science, a positivist vision whose adepts regarded man's moral imponderables as reptilian vestiges that would melt away in the sunshine of the dawning administrative state. The technocrats, abjuring older vocabularies of right and wrong, good and evil, looked forward to the "scientific" solution of man's problems; social scientists would discover the "laws" that govern human nature, much as biologists and physicists deduce such laws within their own realms of study. Wilson's closest adviser, Edward Mandell House, was a specimen of the technocratic type in its purest form: His 1912 novel, *Philip Dru: Administrator*, envisioned the emergence, in the United States, of a technocratic utopia. In the theory of the technocrats, the promoter of free institutions had simply to compile a mass of statistics concerning the "social development" of a formerly oppressed people, sponsor an election or two, and a free state would rise from the ashes of a fallen despotism.

Such was the intellectual equipment Wilson brought with him when, in December 1918, he sailed to Europe on the *George Washington* to preside over the greatest failure of American foreign policy in the 20th century, the unsuccessful effort to create durable free states in central and eastern Europe, particularly in Germany, the largest and most powerful European nation. Jan Smuts, the South African statesman, warned Wilson that the central and eastern European peoples whom he hoped to save were "mostly untrained politically," and were "either incapable or deficient in the power of self-government." But Wilson failed to heed

Mr. Beran is the author of *Forge of Empires 1861–1871: Three Revolutionary Statesmen and the World They Made*, which will be published by the Free Press in the fall.

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the warning. Winston Churchill spoke contemptuously of "the veneer of republican governments and democratic institutions" that Wilson, together with Lloyd George and Clemenceau, imposed upon the Germans. Churchill was right: The Weimar regime was an ineptly husbanded transplant. It put down no roots in the soil, and was soon swept away. Two decades after Wilson sought to make the world "safe for democracy," the free state was again in a death-grapple with the forces of coercion.

The mistakes Wilson made in Europe were repeated, four decades later, in Vietnam, where the U.S. endeavored to prop up a free state governed from Saigon. American policymakers, schooled, like Colonel House, in the assumptions of social science, sought to foist upon a largely uncomprehending people institutions that found no nourishment in the native soil. President Johnson, who had learned his trade from the technocratic artisans of the New Deal, promised in April 1965 to turn the "vast Mekong River" into a power plant to "provide food and water and power on a scale to dwarf even our own TVA." Descending into technobabble, Johnson asserted that a Vietnamese New Deal would "train people in the skills that are needed to manage the process of development." Neither LBJ, who never outgrew his youthful infatuation with Roosevelt's administrative millennium, nor the Saigon politicians themselves, products of the French colonial system, were able to make the case for the free state in a way that spoke to the indigenous population's deepest ideas of right and wrong, good and evil. "Processes of development" meant nothing to the peasants laboring in the rice paddies; constitutional government, the rule of law, and bills of rights meant as little. The result was another papier-mâché free state, one that was sustained largely by American will, and that collapsed as soon as the last American troops were withdrawn.

The technocratic spirit that led to the miscarriage of Wilson's and Johnson's presidencies is not yet dead. Today's technocrats are the pale and bloodless heirs of the great social-scientific positivists of the past. The technocrat's spiritual ancestors—Comte, Marx, Lassalle, and, to drop a bit, Jaurès—were driven by a fiery vision of social-scientific utopia. The vision was watered down in America: Its prophets in this country celebrated the administrative state championed by the Roosevelts, Wilson, Graham Wallas, Herbert Croly, and the young Walter Lippmann. The red-hot utopianism of the social-scientific technocrats has long since faded; but the habits of mind, the intellectual tics and reflexes, remain. So, too, does the social-scientific hostility to older moral and spiritual traditions, with their unambiguous grammar of good and evil: The intellectual heirs of the 19th-century positivists share their forefathers' contempt for what Marx called the "opium of the masses."

President Bush entered office promising to change the sterile, social-scientific culture of the technocratic bureaucracy through programs (among them the now forgotten faith-based initiatives) intended to emphasize the power of older moral and spiritual traditions, with their deeper roots in human nature. But he failed to make good his pledge to "change the tone" of the technocracy. Like Wilson, Bush never found a way to impose his own interior preacherliness on the bureaucratic mandarins charged with carrying out his policy, foreign and domestic. The president's fault is not that he has been too messianic: It is rather that he has not been messianic enough. He has failed to grasp the role the messianic temperament plays in the creation and preservation of free states, and in everything save sermon-making he has surrendered too easily to the technocratic impulses of the time.

The modern free state, Marx observed in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, was midwifed by messianic figures driven by intense spiritual conviction. "The English people," Marx wrote, "borrowed speech, passions, and illusions from the Old Testament for their bourgeois [i.e., free-state] revolution. When the real aim had been achieved, when the bourgeois transformation of English society had been accomplished, Locke supplanted Habakkuk." In deciding to invade Iraq in 2003, President Bush overlooked the insight of Marx and made the same technocratic mistake Wilson and LBJ made before him: He attempted to give Locke to the people he intended to free without first having secured the services of Habakkuk, or the local equivalent thereof.

> Like Wilson, Bush never found a way to impose his own interior preacherliness on the bureaucratic mandarins charged with carrying out his policy.

II.

The failures of Wilson, LBJ, and (to date) Bush to create free states abroad are almost enough to persuade one to embrace the thesis of Harvard's Samuel P. Huntington, who in his 1996 book *The Clash of Civilizations* argued that certain civilizations, by historic temperament and the habits of moral culture, are unsuited to the free institutions of the West. Disillusionment with the Freevangelical messianism of Wilson (or Johnson or Bush) leads naturally to Huntingtonism, perhaps to isolationism; Huntington himself has counseled American leaders to abandon the Truman Doctrine and "refrain from intervening in conflicts in other civilizations," even, or perhaps especially, when such interventions are undertaken to promote the growth of free institutions.

But American history supplies an alternative to the messianism that descends from Wilson. The principal source of the better tradition is the messianism that descends from another American president, Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln is quite definitely in the line of America's Winthropian prophets. American institutions, he asserted, contained the "germ" of freedom, which he believed would "grow and expand into the universal liberty of mankind." Yet at the same time Lincoln had a delicate sense of the vagaries of human nature, and a tender feeling for the vulnerability of free institutions. He was the product of an intellectual culture very

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different from that which molded the mind of Wilson. When he was a young man, the poetry of romanticism was just beginning to reach a wide audience, and his romantic training gave him the keenest insight into the weakness of the constitutional machinery that the statesmen of the 17th and 18th centuries devised in their efforts to create the modern free state.

To remedy the deficiencies of their Enlightenment craftsmanship, the young Lincoln proposed the development, in America, of public myths and rituals, a "*political religion* of the nation." He here drew attention to the distinction Walter Bagehot was to make, in his 1867 book *The English Constitution*, between the "useful" and "serviceable" parts of a constitution (in the contrivance of which Enlightened statesmen like the American Founders have never been surpassed) and the "theatrical elements" that the Enlightened thinkers, for all their perspicacity, overlooked—those elements which, in Bagehot's words, are "mystic" in their claims, and "occult" in their "mode of action." A constitution lacking such elements, Lincoln and Bagehot believed, must eventually perish of its own boringness.

As a mature statesman, Lincoln refined his youthful intuition. To invest the American free state with those "mystic" and "occult" properties which the Enlightened positivists dismissed or ignored, he made his case for the American Union, not in the Enlightened patois of Comte or even Madison, but in the accents of an older moral and spiritual vocabulary—he gave Americans Habakkuk rather than Locke. Invoking the King James Bible, Lincoln asserted, in his Gettysburg and Second Inaugural addresses, that the United States was a chosen nation, one that, in the world struggle between freedom and despotism, had a providential part to play. Paraphrasing the multiple-birth theory of John 3:3, he said that America, having expiated her sins in civil war, would experience a second nativity—a "new birth of freedom." Government of the people, by the people, and for the people would not perish from the earth: It might eventually flourish throughout the world.

Lincoln's was a three-step messianism. First, like all good seers, he took his seat on the tripod and uttered a Prophecy. The Italian patriot Mazzini said that those who would defend the free state "must act like men who have the enemy at their gates, and at the same time like men who are working for eternity." Lincoln was an eschatological stockjobber with an eye on eternity, peddling shares in the great joint-stock company of the future. In making his Prophecy—here we come to messianic Step Two—he did not omit, as free-state do-gooders too often do, to give his people Scapegoats, viz., the evil, despotic slavedrivers. It is now the fashion to deplore the use of such Goats in politics; but as the advertisements of any election season demonstrate, one might as well deplore bad weather. Besides, as Machiavelli observed in the *Discourses on Livy*, Goats rightly used enable the statesman to channel popular energy constructively, and to prevent such energy from assuming more malignant forms. The Third Step of Lincoln's program was the most visionary: He promised that, after a purifying struggle with the Goats, his people would reach the Destination—the palm grove, the milk-and-honey millennium, the New Jerusalem. After this "new birth of freedom," even the Goats would be forgiven, and would be treated, not with malice, but with charity.

Lincoln's Prophecy, his Goats, and his Destination have deep roots in the spiritual soil of the West. Odysseus, after a struggle with sundry Goats, reaches Ithaca; Plato's adepts, after a similar process of expiatory strife, reach Virtue or God. Aeschylus and Virgil pressed the familiar pattern into the service of the state. In the *Oresteia*, a cathartic struggle with goatish passions terminates in the realization of a new ideal—Athens; in the *Aeneid*, the pious hero's clashes with an assortment of goatish villains lead to the founding of Rome. The Hebrew version was grander: Where the Hellenes were limited by their cyclical conception of time, the Jews made the story linear. The Destination became ultimate and apocalyptic—here was the "new heaven and new earth" that St. John the Divine glimpsed on Patmos. Protestantism revived these millennial hopes. In 17th-century England, the Protestant idea deposed the Stuarts and (as Marx observed) created the modern free state. In 19th-century America, it drew fresh strength from the Second Great Awakening. Lincoln saw its force, and laid his plans accordingly.

Lincoln is the font from which the most accomplished of his successors have drawn in their attempts to promote free institutions abroad.

The savior of the American free state was, of course, working within the Western tradition; but the moral facts to which he appealed are universal. A Freevangelical diplomacy that succeeds begins with the recognition that what Lincoln did in this country can be done elsewhere.

III.

Lincoln is the font from which the most accomplished of his successors have drawn in their attempts to promote free institutions abroad. At the Democratic convention in 1936, Franklin Roosevelt spoke of an American "rendezvous with destiny," a mission "to save a great and precious form of government for ourselves and for the world." The gathering world-crisis put his rhetoric to the test. In 1940, when a resurgent Germany was subjugating Europe, Roosevelt confronted the question of whether to support Winston Churchill's effort to defend, in the face of Nazi aggression, the liberties of England. In retrospect, the decision to embrace Churchill appears to have been foreordained. It wasn't. Historian John Lukacs has shown that when, in May 1940, Churchill became prime minister, important figures in the English government—among them Sir Horace Wilson and R. A. "Rab" Butler—doubted the wisdom of resisting Hitler.

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Joseph P. Kennedy, the outgoing American ambassador, succumbed to this mood of defeatism. Democracy, Kennedy said, was "finished" in England. FDR disagreed. A leader, he saw, had emerged there, one who, like Lincoln, had painted the struggle between freedom and tyranny in a romantic, highly colored language, the very archaisms of which, Isaiah Berlin observed, had created a "heroic mood" by "interpreting the present in terms of a vision of the past," as a "battle between simple good and simple evil."

"I felt," Churchill said after King George VI asked him to form a government, "as if I were walking with Destiny, and that all my past life had been but a preparation for this hour and for this trial." Like Lincoln, Churchill uttered a Prophecy: After an interval of heroic suffering, the Goats, he said, would be vanquished, and the Destination would be reached. "We cannot see how deliverance will come or when it will come," Churchill declared in June 1941, "but nothing is more certain than that every trace of Hitler's footsteps, every stain of his infected, corroding fingers will be sponged and purged and, if need be, blasted from the surface of the earth."

The bet Roosevelt placed on Churchill paid off: By backing the English prime minister, FDR laid the groundwork for the redemption of Europe. Some will object that the bet was not bold: Churchill, after all, was practicing his statecraft in the birthplace of the modern free state, where the culture of liberty had been long established and could be expected to be strong. Yet American leaders applied the same principles with no less success in Japan and Germany after their defeat by the Allied powers. In the face of much criticism, Douglas MacArthur and Harry Truman preserved, in Japan, the Chrysanthemum Throne and the Shinto tradition on which it rested—a moral and spiritual bedrock for the new Japanese free state. They had, indeed, no strong leader to back, such as Roosevelt found in Churchill; but the mystical prestige of his throne endowed the otherwise undistinguished Hirohito with all that mysterious authority with which nature had invested Churchill. The Americans bade the emperor revise his Goats, to bring them into line with free institutions; and in his 1946 New Year's Day Rescript, Hirohito rejected as a "false conception" the belief "that the Japanese people are superior to other races and fated to rule the world." The monarch was no longer divine, or even sovereign; according to the new constitution, he was instead the "symbol" of the reformed Japanese state—what Bagehot would have called its theatrical component, charged with tempering daylight with magic. Japan's Destination itself, however, was unaltered; the continuity of the dynasty ensured that the country remained, in the eyes of the people, "blessed by the gods."

In Germany, the constitution of liberty was less alien to the people; there was no need to sanctify it by reviving a castrated version of the Hohenzollern tradition. Liberal constitutional parties, products of the same Protestant traditions that inspired the freedom-fighters of 17th-century England and 18th-century America, had flourished in Germany before they were outmaneuvered and consigned to irrelevance by Bismarck in the 1860s. To give these free-state impulses a chance to grow, however, it was necessary to extirpate the competitor tradition, the romantic paganism Bismarck had invoked in order to consolidate the German Reich. Bismarck himself was taken aback by the power of the genie he had conjured; he devoted himself, after 1870, to restraining it. But the romantic ideals of conquest and *Lebensraum* had by then found a home on Helmuth von Moltke's General Staff. After Germany's defeat in 1918, Wilson, Clemenceau, and Lloyd George failed to dismantle the Staff; the locus of the romantic cult of power remained largely intact.

Truman and Churchill did not repeat the mistake of their predecessors: The Wehrmacht was broken up, and the National Socialists' Goats (the Slavs and Semites) and Destination (Valhalla and *Lebensraum*) were dropped from the national story. At the same time the victors resisted the temptation to which the peacemakers of 1919 had succumbed: They did not impose upon the defeated people a Carthaginian peace. Instead, the subsidies of the Marshall Plan did much to reconcile ordinary Germans to the new free state that grew up in western Germany.

Four decades later, Ronald Reagan came to power in America.

Reagan belonged to the Lincoln-Roosevelt-Truman branch of the Freevangelical school: He understood that free states need Habakkuks as well as Lockes.

The least technocratic of the modern presidents, Reagan likened himself to a mystic, and he was deeply committed to the Winthropian tradition of American messianism: In his January 1974 address to the first Conservative Political Action Conference, he revived Winthrop's signature line. "You can call it mysticism if you want to," Reagan said, "but I have always believed that there was some divine plan that placed this great continent between two oceans to be sought out by those who were possessed of an abiding love of freedom and a special kind of courage."

Reagan belonged rather to the Lincoln-Roosevelt-Truman branch of the Freevangelical school than the Wilsonian: He understood that free states need Habakkuks as well as Lockes. In the early 1980s there was sentiment, within the administration, for challenging the Soviet empire in Cuba. Presidential aide Michael Deaver quoted Secretary of State Alexander Haig as telling the president, "Give me the word and I'll make that island a f****** parking lot." Reagan demurred. His instinct appears, in retrospect, to have been sound. However much ordinary Cubans might have yearned for a freer, better system, no leader had emerged, either in Cuba itself or in the diaspora, who had begun the work of reconciling the inchoate yearnings of the people with their traditional moral and spiritual vocabularies: None had translated Locke into the Cuban vernacular in a way that touched the people's deepest ideas of right and wrong, good and evil.

Turning from Cuba, Reagan made his principal thrust against

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Communism in Poland, where two leaders, Lech Walesa and Pope John Paul II, had emerged who spoke of freedom in accents derived from the country's aboriginal Catholic tradition, a set of moral and spiritual ideals with deep roots in the Polish character. In his book *The President, the Pope, and the Prime Minister: Three Who Changed the World*, John O'Sullivan offers a glimpse of the Lincolnian wisdom that underlay Reagan's statesmanship. "I have had a feeling," Reagan said, "particularly in the Pope's visit to Poland, that religion may turn out be the Soviets' Achilles' heel." Reagan did what he could to support the Polish free-state movement, and in doing so initiated the chain of events that led to the collapse of Communism.

IV.

Romanticism is the catalyst of all the potent political myths of the modern period; in reviving the ideas and symbols—the Goats and Destinations—that the Enlightenment had relegated to the ash-heap, the romantic poets supplied modern statesmen with the tools they needed to mold opinion in an age of mass communications. Bismarck, Marx, and Bakunin used romantic techniques to advance philosophies of paternalist coercion and terror that are not yet dead. Winthropian free-state messianism, revived by the romantic counter-conjuring of Lincoln during his struggle with the paternalist slaveholders, provides a salutary means of counteracting coercive romanticism—or so FDR, Truman, and Reagan believed.

The Freevangelical policy that descends from Lincoln preserves what is best in America's messianic tradition—the belief that the United States is a "city on a hill," the vindicator of principles that will in time "liberate the world"—while it at the same time prevents messianic overreach by supplying criteria for American intervention in the name of freedom. American efforts to promote free-state institutions abroad are most likely to succeed (1) where strong leaders have emerged capable of expressing the principles of liberty in the characteristic moral and spiritual idiom of the people and (2) where those leaders have made the case for the free state in a way that touches their people's deepest ideas of right and wrong, good and evil, justice and injustice.

Iraq, when examined in the light of these criteria, was a poor candidate for free-state intervention. No leader had there emerged, either among the Sunnis or the Shiites, with the combination of will, imagination, and popular support that promised to vindicate the free-state ideal in Mesopotamia; and none had attempted to reconcile free institutions with the region's traditional Goats and Destinations. The strong leaders in Iraq are hostile to the free-state ideal and, like the German demagogues after World War I, they are intent on using the machinery of democracy to undermine the liberal regime the U.S. has put in place. Sunni leaders regard the American-inspired institutions of the nascent Iraqi free state much as embittered Germans regarded the Weimar regime, while Shiite leaders seek to frustrate America's efforts to promote freedom in the Middle East by drawing closer to the Iranian autocracy.

Iraq was scarcely an ideal candidate for Freevangelical renovation; yet, as a result of the sacrifices of American soldiers, the case is by no means hopeless, and it is therefore a mystery why President Bush, with his evident fondness for the Freevangelical school, has done so little toward a revision of regional Goats, and toward the encouragement of strong men who might persuade their people that the free state is compatible with their immemorial Destinations. It is true that a number of intellectuals in the Islamic world have worked to reconcile the constitution of liberty with the historic traditions of Islam—have tried to show that Islam's Habakkuks were crypto-Lockes, whose shades if summoned would bless the free state. But their work has so far been too academic, too bookish, to stir the blood of masses of men and women. We touch the limits of the Freevangelical school. The United States can encourage free-state leaders; it cannot create them. Roosevelt did not create Churchill, Reagan did not create Walesa or John Paul II. Truman and MacArthur, it is true, did to some extent create the free-state Hirohito; but they did not create the Chrysanthemum tradition from which Hirohito's moral authority derived.

The neoconservative's skepticism toward the romantic modes is in many ways salutary, but it leads him to overprize the merely technical.

Part of the difficulty, no doubt, lies in the neoconservative advice upon which the president leaned pretty hard in the days leading up to the commencement of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The neoconservative, in his purest form, is a refugee from a romance that didn't work. Having broken with Marx and the god that failed, the neoconservative is like a jilted lover, wary of ever again succumbing to the seductions that kill. The neoconservative's skepticism toward the romantic modes is in many ways salutary, but it leads him to overprize the merely technical. A politics that eschews romance altogether eventually becomes sterile and technocratic. The neoconservative seems to have hoped, when American troops marched into Baghdad, that reason and enlightened self-interest alone would persuade the citizenry to embrace the free-state ideals they brought with them. The neoconservative here overlooked all that romantic effort and spiritual travail that Lincoln and Churchill, Mazzini and Gandhi, the 17th-century Protestants and the 20th-century Zionists found indispensable in their efforts to vindicate the free-state ideal. In theory, the president's Bible Brigades, schooled in the most romantic poetry known to the West, ought to have enabled him to make good the psychological naïveté of the neoconservative: ought to have supplied that element of romance and spiritual acuity that was missing in the neoconservative's analysis. But it didn't happen that way. **NR**

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■ PUBLIC POLICY II

A Pox on Sarbox

The unintended and rotten consequences of the Sarbanes-Oxley law

JIM MANZI

As a very young teenager on my first unsupervised afternoon in New York City, I promptly lost $10 playing three-card monte. Afterwards, I vowed that I'd never get pulled into this kind of rigged game again. I had learned an important lesson: Ignore what the dealer is saying and keep your eye on the money card. This can be a good strategy in other areas of life, too. Take, for example, the Sarbanes-Oxley law ("Sarbox")—a measure that claims to make the stock market safer, but actually has the effect of taking money from small investors and giving it to multimillionaires.

In 2002, on the heels of business scandals at Enron and WorldCom, Congress passed Sarbox to restore investor confidence in the integrity of U.S. public markets. Sarbox imposed a grab-bag of requirements on public companies—everything from criminal penalties for executives who willfully misreport financial results to restrictions on insider trading. Much of the energy behind this legislation was generated by the market meltdown that had eliminated about 50 percent of the value of the S&P 500 stock-market index in the 28 months leading up to the passage of the law. Asset bubbles are almost always followed by stricter regulation of markets. Human nature being what it is, bubbles in their later stages typically invite an abnormally high amount of fraud, and the resulting regulations are often excessively focused on preventing whatever particular flavors of malfeasance were most recently prevalent. Targeting wrongdoing is easy to understand, plays to our need to believe that somebody must be to blame for our sudden loss of wealth, and allows politicians to be seen doing something. Such regulations are usually produced very quickly, and often have effects that the authors never anticipated. The drafting and implementation of Sarbox is an excellent example of this dynamic.

NOT QUITE AS PLANNED

The most consequential component of Sarbox has turned out to be something that was not the subject of deep inquiry at the time: the "Section 404" requirement that companies specify, execute, and externally certify procedures for tracking and reporting financial results. The impact of this blandly written 168-word requirement, as subsequently interpreted by regulatory agencies and the accounting profession, is a classic example of the law of unintended consequences. According to the independent, bipartisan Committee on Capital Markets Regulation, Section 404 has driven the first-year cost of implementing Sarbox to about $15 to $20 billion, or more than 35 times what was estimated when the law was passed.

What are we getting for all that money? All else equal, more reliable financial reporting should lead to greater investor confidence and tend to increase stock values; on the other hand, all else equal, higher costs and the partial loss of management attention should tend to depress profits and therefore reduce values. Estimating the net effect is extremely difficult since it implicitly requires us to be able to know how investors would have valued companies in the absence of Sarbox. Partisans on both sides of the issue point to studies that purport to quantify the overall impact of the law, often with risible levels of asserted precision. Sarbox opponents often cite a University of Rochester study that estimates Sarbox has reduced total market capitalization by about $1.4 trillion due to net negative investor reaction. To put it in context, this is close to 10 percent of total U.S. GDP, which is pretty hard to imagine. Sarbox supporters cite an MIT study indicating that complying with Sarbox can reduce cost of capital by about a full percentage point. The author of this study, Ryan LaFond, was honest enough to admit: "I'm very comfortable saying there are some benefits, and they are economically meaningful. Whether they exceed the costs, I have no idea."

The root problem with all of these studies is that there is no objective, scientific way to know what stock prices should be. That's why we spend huge sums of money running stock markets. Of course, if you just ignore all of the complexities of real capital markets, Sarbox can be seen as a straightforward regulation that guarantees that "a dollar of net income is a dollar of net income." In this view, the argument that we should let the market sort out what is the right level of spending on internal controls and audits is like arguing that we should not prosecute a business that sells 15 rancid ounces of meat as a pound, and instead just let consumers decide which butchers they want to patronize.

It is true that there is a practical role in many spheres of life for regulations that reduce the costs that consumers bear to find what they want. Generally they are most appropriate for quantities, like weights, that can be defined unambiguously and assessed relatively cheaply, and for matters on which the result of misinformation can be catastrophic to health or physical safety. But this is nothing like the case with the evaluation of corporate performance. The appropriate measures for this are constantly debated; they are difficult and expensive; and they vary widely from one industry, time period, and company to another. In many of the most innovative sectors of the economy, the very accounting values, such as Net Income, that Sarbox is focused on validating are so useless that managers and owners simply ignore them when operating and valuing companies.

Former senator Paul Sarbanes, the Maryland Democrat who coauthored Sarbox, spent effectively his entire career in government, and apparently considers dealing with these issues way beneath his pay grade. His take on the law is simple: "The

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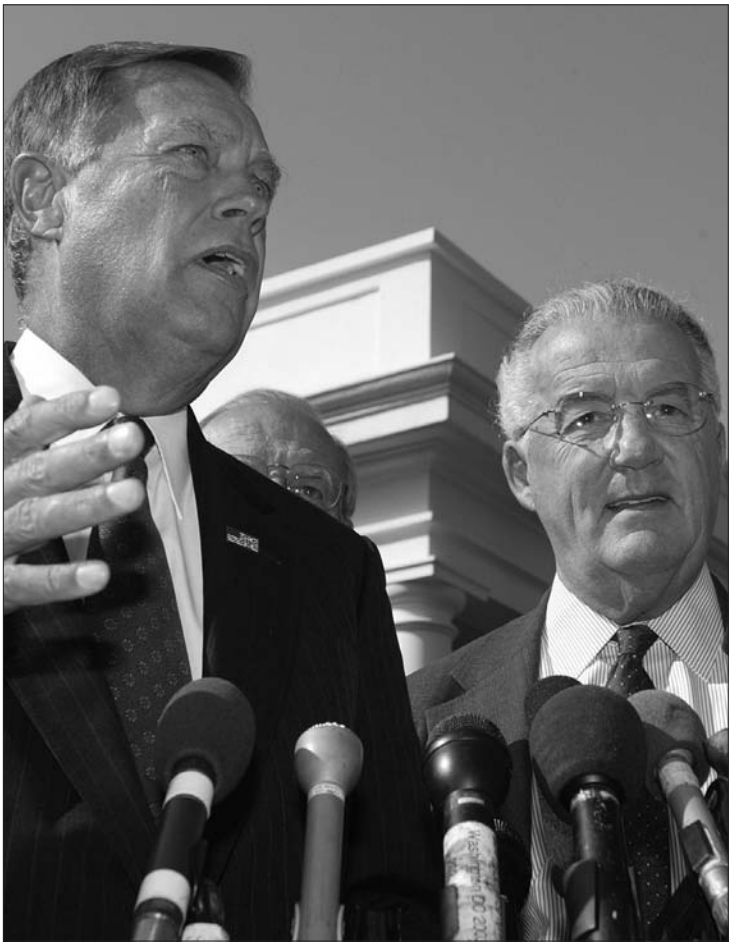
bill is really about ensuring that public companies have a legitimate system of internal financial controls. To me that is a worthwhile cost." Well, thanks. But how about you invest your money only in companies that have to bear these compliance costs, and I'll choose for myself?

'GOOD FOR US, BAD FOR AMERICA'

While it's hard to measure the net impact of the law on overall market value, one relative effect is very clear: Sarbox is much worse for small public companies than large ones. For very large companies Sarbox is just another unpleasant cost of being publicly listed in America, but for smaller public companies it can make public ownership prohibitively expensive.



Representative Oxley and Senator Sarbanes, source of much woe

A group of professors at Berkeley and USC demonstrated analytically that Sarbox has increased the rate at which small public companies have exited the stock market, disproportionately by selling themselves to private-equity firms that are not subject to Sarbox. No such effect is evident for larger public companies. This analysis is entirely consistent with my experiences as founder and CEO of a profitable, high-growth software company. We recently sold a significant slice of the shares in our company to a large private-equity firm. In contrast, five or ten years ago the obvious decision for us would have been to go public through an Initial Public Offering (IPO), but now the costs of being public are so much higher that it is just not worth it. Because Sarbox compliance costs are so much higher in relation to company size for small companies than for large ones, the break-even size at which it is sensible for a company to become public has risen.

This creates an enormous arbitrage opportunity for private investors to purchase the equity of smaller high-growth companies if they don't believe all of the extra compliance work required by Sarbox is really economically valuable. As it turns out, many private-equity firms have created practice areas to exploit exactly this opportunity, and my company was able to get the capital that we wanted at an acceptable price. The fact that these firms generate much higher sustainable returns than public markets indicates that their judgment that good investments can be made even in companies with "inadequate" financial controls just might be accurate.

So if successful smaller companies still make out fine and private-equity investors have been granted a new source of excellent profits, then who gets hurt? You do—unless you happen to have several spare millions of dollars lying around to buy your way into a large private-equity fund. In the long run, higher investment returns require greater risk. Private-equity and similar investment vehicles consistently generate better returns than the public markets by accepting the risks of, for example, earlier-stage companies or more mature companies that require radical turnarounds. Public markets are designed to allow smaller investors to participate in equity financing by efficiently pooling their capital. With Sarbox, Congress has expressed the view that many of these demonstrated opportunities to earn higher returns don't belong in the public markets because small investors aren't smart enough to evaluate them.

Therefore, the primary effect of Sarbox to date has actually been to rope off some of the opportunities to invest in smaller or riskier companies and make them available only to private investors, which is to say, very rich people. This is precisely why Steve Schwarzman, CEO of private-equity titan Blackstone, has described Sarbox as "probably the best thing that's happened to our business and one of the worst things that has happened to America."

Ironically, Blackstone has now announced that it intends to conduct an IPO. If that happens, many other large private-equity firms will very likely follow. This would allow small investors to buy shares in private-equity firms in order to buy equity in the companies that they otherwise could have invested in directly anyway. In theory, the private-equity firms will provide value-added investment selection and supervision, but small investors will no longer have the choice of whether to accept this help or simply make decisions on their own.

One way or another, market intermediaries will emerge to try to connect the huge pools of small-investor savings in 401(k) and individual accounts with the higher-return opportunities that Sarbox has pushed out of the public markets. It's like water flowing downhill. Ultimately, Congress must either absolutely deny small investors the right to invest in these situations, or else allow these investments to occur in even-less-regulated

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environments with higher transaction costs than the public markets. What Congress can't do is legislate away the relationship between risk and return.

RACE TO REFORM

Republicans in the last Congress put forward a bill that would ameliorate the worst effects of Sarbox by making it optional for companies with less than $700 million of market value, and limiting the costs of audits. It might be natural to assume that prospects for reform have dimmed in the new Congress, but—on this issue at least—many Democrats are sounding like grown-ups. Speaker Nancy Pelosi's Innovation Agenda calls for requiring "specifically tailored guidelines for small public companies to ensure Sarbanes-Oxley requirements are not overly burdensome." New York senator Chuck Schumer has called for Sarbox to be "re-examined." In real man-bites-dog news, New York governor Eliot Spitzer recently said that Sarbox "has created an unbelievable burden for small companies and may be preventing some initial public offerings." Letting Nancy Pelosi, Chuck Schumer, and Eliot Spitzer get to your right on securities regulation can't be a good idea. Republicans should push for action soon, and should focus on making the market-value threshold for opt-out as high as possible.

More broadly, reform of Sarbox should have been seen in the context of overall securities-market regulation. Some amount of market regulation is required for markets to function, but too much chokes off growth. While it is hard to evaluate fully the impact of any one regulation, U.S. securities markets have been subject to a raft of recent regulations, lawsuits, and aggressive government prosecution at precisely the same time as real international competition has started to emerge. While some erosion in the dominant position held by U.S. equity markets is probably inevitable based on global economic trends, it's hard to explain how the U.S. share of global IPO value has declined from 50 percent to 5 percent since 2000—and the U.S. share of total equity capital raised in the world's top ten economies has declined from 41 percent to 28 percent since 1995—unless the recent increases in oversight costs had something to do with it.

It's a commonplace to say that we live in an information economy, and that increasingly we are knowledge workers. What is often overlooked about this statement is that knowledge workers are *workers*. Just as factory workers in an industrial economy were subject to constant downward wage pressure, so are knowledge workers in an information economy as their tasks become commoditized. This is why standard software engineering, often seen in popular imagination as the acme of high-wage knowledge work, is increasingly being outsourced to lower-wage economies.

Market-making, in the broad sense of seeing and connecting otherwise disjointed problems and solutions, is the high ground in an information economy because it resists commoditization. The operation of markets has become as central to the knowledge economy as the machine-tool sector was to the industrial economy. Losing our leading position in global equity markets would be disastrous for the U.S., and not just for big investors on Wall Street. Congress should approach reform of Sarbox as one battle in a larger, ongoing struggle to maintain the international competitiveness of U.S. equity markets. **NR**

■ **ESSAY II**

Out of Mortal Threat, an Opportunity

The present situation will force Americans to define themselves

WILFRED M. McCLAY

THIS is one of those moments in our history when we are asking ourselves, with fresh intensity, who we are, as a nation and a people. We are not the only ones in the world asking themselves such questions. The current national elections in France, for example, have brought to the surface a growing unease in the land over the fraying condition of French national identity, an unease that candidates are having to address. Europe itself, along with the countries composing it, suffers from a serious crisis of self-definition, as entrenched dogmas of transnationality and multicultural inclusiveness begin to look like signposts on the road to cultural suicide. But such questions pose themselves with particular force for Americans, whose sense of themselves as a people has always been strongly tied to their shared acceptance of certain conscious ideals.

There are plenty of reasons to be pessimistic. Our shared sense of what is central to our national character has become confused and eroded, as our knowledge of our distinctive history has waned, and as the meaning of citizenship itself has been diluted and diminished. Yet there also are reasons to believe that a considerable reservoir of American patriotic sentiment exists to be drawn upon, even if it is not always very visible or very eager to declare itself. There is still, in short, a continuing sense of the American national character, even if it is not always easy to define, and even if it shows its nature most clearly—in much the same way that individual character does—only on those occasions when necessity evokes it.

It should not detract from the urgency of our present concerns to note that they all have a familiar ring to them. We have been here before. Not exactly the same place, of course. History never repeats itself in that way, and many of the particulars we now face are quite unprecedented. But the general shape of the concerns is not. We Americans have always puzzled over the precise shape of our national identity, and worried about the state of our culture. We have always asked such questions about ourselves. Our readi-

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ness to ask such questions itself offers an insight into the kind of people we are.

RIGHT FROM THE BEGINNING

Why are we this way? Perhaps we can thank (or blame) those fiercely introspective New England Puritans, who made soul-searching into an art form, with their copious diaries and gloomy declension narratives and thundering jeremiads, all animated by a profound sense of mission, of an "errand into the wilderness" that could not be permitted to fail. Or J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, whose proclamation that the American was to be a "new man" amalgamated out of the elements of the old ones offered a vision of America that has run, in various forms, like a brilliant ribbon through the nation's entire history.

Or perhaps look to the lofty expectations of the Revolutionaries and the Founders, who proclaimed a Novus Ordo Seclorum, saw the new American nation as a successor to Rome, and wondered, with Alexander Hamilton, whether it was "reserved to the people of this country" to decide for all humanity "whether societies of men are really capable or not of establishing good government from reflection and choice." Or to Abraham Lincoln's more pithy description of his nation as "the last best hope of mankind," a phrase suggestive of a secular errand just as fraught with ultimate significance as the Puritan one.

In other words, there was a steady succession of voices proclaiming that American history would be the carrier of a larger meaning. The particulars changed, the cast of characters changed, but the theme persisted, clinging tenaciously to our national consciousness and experience. America was to be a land of fresh promise and new beginnings, a grand stage for the regeneration of humanity. It would be the New Zion, or New Israel—or maybe a New Rome, New England, New London, New Amsterdam, New Canaan, New Harmony, New York, New . . . You-Name-It. And for all the complications of our history and tatters in its mortal dress, it has never lost its deep connection to that great theme of renewal and rebirth, even today—which is one reason immigration has always been such a thorny but vital issue for us, lying as it does so close to our sense of ourselves as a land of new beginnings and second chances.

Despite the dedicated efforts of several generations of scholars to exorcise it, there remains about American society a powerful sense of something that is called, imperfectly, American exceptionalism. It is not always clear what this term means. But it surely points toward the nation's persistent sense of a larger purpose in the world. The one thing that Americans just cannot seem to reconcile themselves to is the idea of being just another country, in a world of countries. (In fact, they are far more ready to believe in the unique and all-pervasive evil of their country than to believe in its ordinariness. Like a Black Mass, this is one of those inversions that amount to a reiteration of the old faith, only with shadings reversed.)

It may seem hard to believe that this same sense of purposefulness could be lurking, latent and inarticulate, in the souls of even the most unpromising young people who cross one's field of vision in contemporary America. But I would not bet against it. Get these young people away from the fog of their peer culture and away from the confections of their endlessly mediated world, and you may see a different picture. Human nature has not changed. The human heart is filled with endless chaotic yearnings, most of which point toward mirages and dead ends; but what it most yearns for is something that will give it definition, direction, meaning, focus, something that brings the formlessness of life to the sharpness and clarity of a point. That brings redemption to life's wasted time. The illusions of popular culture will never give them that, and some will eventually be driven to look elsewhere. There are needs that one can't understand, or even see, until the moment is ripe for them; and then they emerge. That is part of the mystery of character, and of new beginnings.

It is also important to recognize that many of our current problems arise out of distortions and misuses of otherwise good ideas and things. Multiculturalism takes a generous inclusiveness and makes it into a hard-and-fast principle of social separateness. Postmodernism takes a healthy skepticism and makes it into a dogma of weightless agnosticism. Dogmatic secularism reintroduces the very ideological coerciveness it once claimed to rescue us from, and thereby undermines the genial tolerance that is the chief virtue of a secular state. Openness to immigration and to the peoples of all nations has long been one of the defining features of American life—but not when that openness comes at the expense of the very idea of American citizenship and of a coherent and historically grounded national culture. Even our astonishingly toxic and corrupt popular culture tends to be defended by reference to gold-plated principles: free markets and free expression.

The one thing that Americans just cannot seem to reconcile themselves to is the idea of being just another country, in a world of countries.

One can easily add to this list. Freedom itself, in whose name we justify much of what we do in the world, becomes meaningless when it is not ordered and directed by a sense of proper human ends, but instead serves as a charter for aimless self-indulgence and self-exaltation. The point is that without the right countervailing or balancing forces at work in our society, even the best principles may become pernicious. The corruption of the best can give us the worst. And in all cases, the countervailing forces that we need are fundamentally conservative ones, deriving not from clever abstractions or legalisms pulled out of the air, but out of a high respect for the accumulated wisdom of previous generations, and the sheer momentum of lived experience—which is to say, from common sense. But tradition and common sense are not an easy sell these days. It is hard to gain a hearing for sober, prudential wisdom in the acrimonious and character-assassinating public debates we now tend to have in this country. And it is hard to fight the sheer dynamism of American culture, our ingrained fondness for the new,

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even if we know that such dynamism cannot last for long without such underlying stabilizers as the rule of law, the discipline of work, intact families, and settled mores.

Hard, because there is no denying the fact that the American dream is in some respects a thoroughly romantic and liberating one: the song of the open road, the prospect of big skies and boundless possibilities, the chance to begin the world over again—or at least one's own little corner of it. This understanding of America is extraordinarily vivid and powerful, and has deep historical roots; its optimism is a drawing card for people all over the world. It was part of the political genius of Ronald Reagan that, rather than disdaining these romantic impulses of American life, he embraced them warmly, and made them his own. By incorporating them into American conservatism, he provided exactly the countervailing elements and defining horizons that those impulses so badly needed—and endowed conservatism with an élan and vigor that had formerly been liberalism's province. Conservatives may have winced whenever Reagan quoted Thomas Paine; but he knew exactly what he was doing. He understood that respect for the American dream had to be a part of American conservatism, and vice versa. This is why he remains such a signal figure.

There may be a certain providential quality to the challenges that have been placed before us at this time.

SEEDS OF RENEWAL

As for the toxicity of our manufactured popular culture, which captures and amplifies so many of our other problems and plays a huge role in creating our problematic image in the world, we should not yield to pessimism about the possibility of cultural renewal, as if we were in the grip of determinisms more powerful than those of physics. Conservatives, of all people, ought to reject the lazy deification of the marketplace; and Americans more generally should regain their former confidence in the possibility of making positive transformations in their national life. The realm of culture is precisely the area where intelligent philanthropy can accomplish a great deal of good, particularly in fostering new venues and institutions—think tanks, media, schools, colleges, and other avenues of intellectual and cultural renewal—which can both support fresh alternatives and challenge the existing ones to do better.

Think for a moment of Renaissance Florence. The great cultural flowering that we associate with that time and place would not have been possible without the general prosperity provided by a vibrant commercial economy. But that was not enough. Great art also requires great patrons, and the economics of the market could never have produced the profusion of stunning works that now fill the Uffizi Gallery. That in turn suggests where philanthropy can enter, playing in our day a role not unlike what the Medicis and other great patrons of art played in theirs, giving support to worthy ideas and experiments that hold the promise of cultural renewal. The problem is admittedly vast, but there is no need to address it at every single point. The root of the problem with our popular culture is the degeneration of our elite culture, and the restoration of the latter would soon have a powerful effect on the former.

Finally, we should be mindful of the complexities inherent in the concept of "character" itself, whether applied to individuals or groups, including nations. In the end, character is a mystery of unfathomable depths, that defies all determinisms. We can guess at, but we cannot really know, a person's character until it is put to a real test. Often the result that emerges will come as a complete surprise, even to the person himself. Braggarts and bullies may wilt in the time of trial, while Clark Kents become Supermen, and gentle mothers become fierce as lions. Ne'er-do-wells miraculously get their act together when the chips are down, while those with perfect pedigrees turn out to be perfect disappointments. That tattooed, body-pierced, video-sated lunkhead down the street may have heroic potential in him that will take your breath away, when the conditions are right to call forth those qualities that, amazingly, were in him all along. In the face of death, some react with bitterness and morbid self-preoccupation, while others respond generously, with gratefulness for the life lived. Why one and not the other? Who can know? Character is not a determinate "set," something fixed and permanent, like a second nature. We can never know how we will respond until we have to.

So only a challenge can reveal what is there, concealed in the depths of character. Our character is elicited by life's challenges, and is shaped and reshaped by our responses to them—a fact with immediate relevance to the present situation. In other words, human character must, so to speak, be scored dynamically, rather than extrapolated from current trends. The historian Arnold Toynbee saw the dynamics of challenge-and-response as the testing ground of a civilization's greatness. The chief sources of growth in a civilization arise dialectically, from its responses to the mortal threats and sharp blows directed at it. The question is what the threats call forth. Do they generate energy and purposefulness? Or despair and inanition? Great civilizations, Toynbee thought, die from suicide rather than murder, which is to say that they die when they cease to have the will to respond vigorously and creatively to the challenges facing them.

The lesson for Americans is clear. There may be today, just as George Kennan famously observed 60 years ago of the Cold War, a certain providential quality to the challenges that have been placed before us at this time. Certainly the challenges presented by Islamist terrorism are ones that confront us (and even more profoundly confront Europe) in the very places where we are confused and irresolute, and force us to see that we have fallen into ways of thinking and living that we cannot and should not sustain. They represent a mortal threat—but they are also an opportunity. By forcing us to defend ourselves, they force us to take to heart the question of what kind of civilization we are willing, and able, to defend. Not merely as an academic question, but a question of life and death. **NR**

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the long view

ROB LONG

Conference-Call Transcript

NBC Interoffice Communications Department

"Hi! Do we have the West Coast?"

"We're here—it's me, Jeff, Kevin, and Michelle."

"Great! You've got news here, and Brian, are you on?"

"I'm here."

"Well, great. Okay, I'll start. We just want to tell you guys how incredibly *thrilled* we are with the Seung-Hui Cho numbers. Running that video—and, hey, look, I know it was controversial, and I know we've taken some flak for it—but running it wall-to-wall like we did was *so totally* worth it."

"How do you figure that?"

"Who's talking there?"

"This is Brian. How do you figure it was worth it? We look like irresponsible tabloid hypocrites."

"I disagree. I mean, we did it *full out*, no one's denying that. But we didn't do it all Fox News-y."

"Jeff, out here on the West Coast, the feeling is we showed the rantings of a mass murderer with taste and restraint."

"Thanks, Kevin."

"I disagree. We embarrassed ourselves."

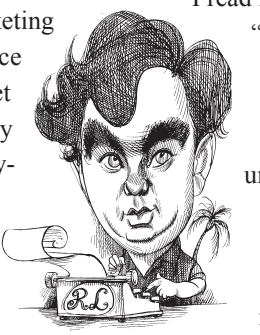
"Hey, Brian, was there push-back? Yeah, okay, there was push-back. But was there also a 24 share in the key demos, and a spike in 18-to-29 numbers for all of our news offerings across the board? So, you know, you can call us a lot of things, but you've also got to call us Number 1 in morning and evening news among all Americans under 35."

"Haven't we just sent the message that we're encouraging and rewarding this kind of sick violence?"

"No. No, no, no, no, no. No. Not at all. No. Not in the least. No. No."

"Not even a little?"

"Okay, a *little*, sure. But I think the important message here that we're sending is more like, 'Hey, we deplore this kind of violence and this kind of heinous act, and if you're planning to do something like this, you know, just, just, you know, just *don't*, okay? Just *don't do it*. But if you're like already 110 percent committed to it, and you *have* a video or something prepared, just know that NBC has the promotional platform and the marketing savvy to really get that piece of tape out there, to really get your message sampled by opinion-makers, young early-adopters, and sophisticated consumers in the 18-to-49 demo. But obviously, you know, we're like, *totally* against this kind of violent outburst and stuff. Key message: Don't do something like that. Secondary message: If you do, keep in the back of your mind that NBC *owns* this space. NBC is *the* place to go if you're a violent, delusional, sick mass-murderer, or if you're just interested in what someone like that has to say. Brian, does that help you?"



"No."

"Jeff? This is the West Coast here. We just all want to say how much we agree with your point about our promotional platform. Our feeling is, we've got some great momentum here going into sweeps next month, and we're wondering if we can piggyback on some of this energy. We're already preparing a special *Law & Order* episode, starring Seung-Hui Cho—we're digitizing his image and playing around with it so that he can appear to be screaming at Sam Waterston—"

"I love that!"

"Yeah, it's pretty cool technology. Thank God the kid sent us as much footage as he did. The bad news is, he'll have to be posthumously inducted into the Screen Actor's Guild, which is tricky business, next-of-kin-wise. But we're into it."

"Love it."

"Jeff? This is Kevin in L.A. Quick question: Has anyone read the kid's play? I saw on Drudge that he wrote some kind of play for his creative-writing class, and I'm wondering if that's maybe something we should option?"

"Good question. Did anyone from News read the play?"

"I read it."

"Great! What did you think, Brian?"

"I thought it was awful."

"Okay, but was there a unique voice there? Is it something that could be made into a one-off special?"

"People! He's a mass-murderer! What are we doing here?"

"Maybe a sit-com? A dark one, obviously, but . . ."

"Hello?"

"Run it with a 'parental discretion' disclaimer, maybe? That always drives the younger demo numbers up."

"Listen to me! I thought the play was the angry raving of a deeply disturbed young man. It made me sad. And it made me sick. And frankly, after I read it, I felt dirty and demeaned."

"So, sort of like *Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip*?"

"I'm hanging up now."

"Let's just option it, Kevin. Option it now and we'll figure it out later."

"Already done."

"Brian, are you still there?'

"Yes."

"Brian, I want you to know that we'll do it tastefully, okay? With restraint. I mean, hey, we're not Fox News."

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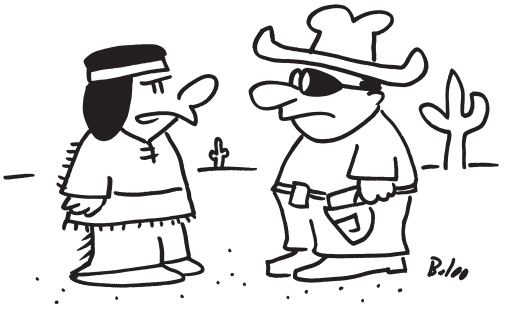
HELP!!!!

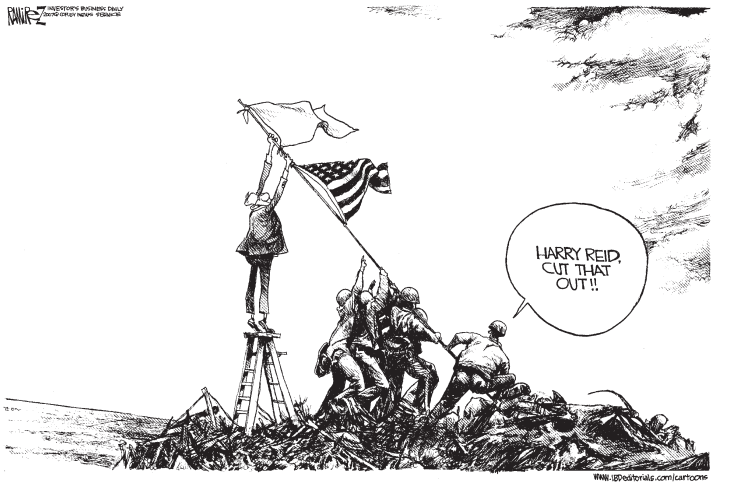
Harry Reid's Blooper

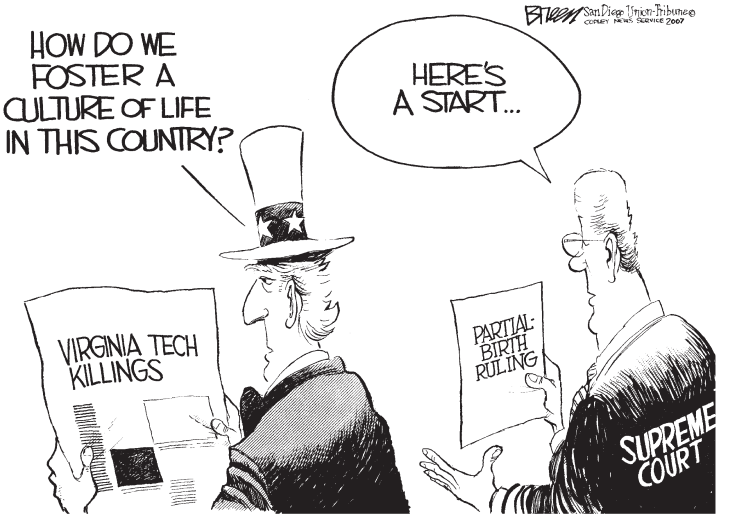
Like that party-poop, Jack Frost,
Reid announced, "The war is lost."
He's backed off, but there it was,
Lying there with zero buzz—
Just a thing to kick around.
Cindy chewed it some (the sound
Soothes the Left); but mostly there
Was that "oops" sound in the air.

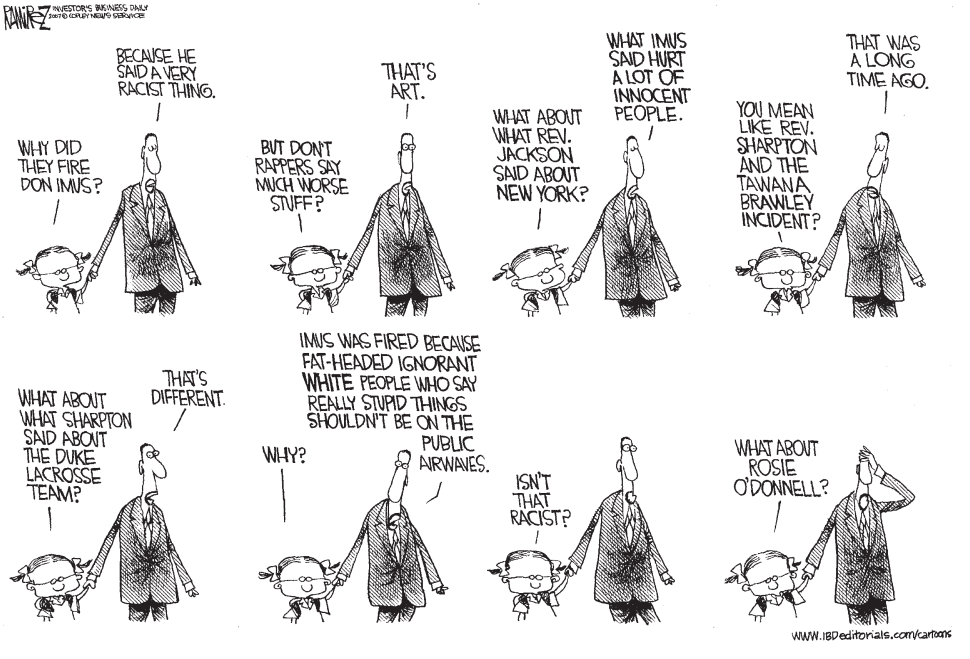
—W. H. von Dreele



"I'm *not responsible for the junk Ward Churchill says!*"




HOW DO WE FOSTER A CULTURE OF LIFE IN THIS COUNTRY?
HERE'S A START...
VIRGINIA TECH KILLINGS
PARTIAL-BIRTH RULING
SUPREME COURT


BECAUSE HE SAID A VERY RACIST THING.
WHY DID THEY FIRE DON IMUS?
THAT'S ART.
BUT DON'T RAPPERS SAY MUCH WORSE STUFF?
WHAT IMUS SAID HURT A LOT OF INNOCENT PEOPLE.
WHAT ABOUT WHAT REV. JACKSON SAID ABOUT NEW YORK?
THAT WAS A LONG TIME AGO.
YOU MEAN LIKE REV. SHARPTON AND THE TAWANA BRAWLEY INCIDENT?
THAT'S DIFFERENT.
WHAT ABOUT WHAT SHARPTON SAID ABOUT THE DUKE LACROSSE TEAM?
IMUS WAS FIRED BECAUSE FAT-HEADED IGNORANT WHITE PEOPLE WHO SAY REALLY STUPID THINGS SHOULDN'T BE ON THE PUBLIC AIRWAVES.
WHY?
ISN'T THAT RACIST?
WHAT ABOUT ROSIE O'DONNELL?
WWW.IBDeditorials.com/cartoons

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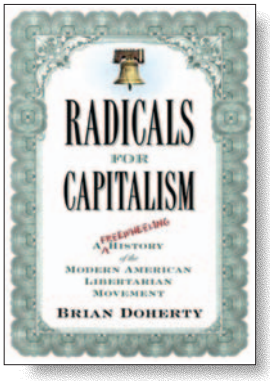

Radicals for Capitalism: A Freewheeling History of the Modern American Libertarian Movement, by Brian Doherty (PublicAffairs, 768 pp., $35)

JONAH GOLDBERG

"Ayn Rand is the greatest human being who has ever lived."

"Ayn Rand, by virtue of her philosophical genius, is the supreme arbiter in any issue pertaining to what is rational, moral, or appropriate to man's life on earth."

"Once one is acquainted with Ayn Rand and/or her work, the measure of one's virtue is intrinsically tied to the position one takes regarding her and/or it."

These, according to Brian Doherty's new book *Radicals for Capitalism*, are just three of the "implicit premises" of Ayn Rand's inner circle. These ideas were taught to young initiates through an organization called the Nathaniel Branden Institute, whose founder, Nathaniel Branden, was born Nathan Blumenthal but changed his name—so the story goes—when he fell under Rand's spell: "Branden" is an anagram for "ben Rand," or "son of Rand" in Hebrew. The married Branden denied this oft-repeated claim, perhaps because it would make his sexual relationship with Rand too incestuous even for one who truly did believe she was the greatest human being who has ever lived. Considering that it was National Review—in a 1957 Whittaker Chambers review of *Atlas Shrugged*—that famously read Ayn Rand and her philosophy out of the conservative movement as a form of cult, it seems worth mentioning all of this, if for no other motivation than team pride: "We told you so!"

That being said, *Radicals for Capitalism* is, quite simply, the best book of its kind ever written. This should not be interpreted as faint praise merely because it is the only book of its kind ever written (at least that I am aware of). It is an extraordinary accomplishment. Doherty, a senior editor at *Reason* magazine, has amassed an astonishing amount of information, often from hard-to-find sources, and presented it in a way that is accessible to the novice and illuminating to those already familiar with its subject matter (this reviewer falls into both camps, depending on the topic).

The book is by no means flawless. There are passages where Doherty lapses into movement stenography, calling the roll of those attending meetings forgotten even by most in attendance—and with such amnesia subtracting very little from human wisdom. Some overlong sentences are almost Bushian in that they start out fine, but you have no idea where they might end up. Also, there is so much material—and there are so many overlapping narratives—that at times Doherty's timelines seem a bit tangled. But these are mere potholes in an otherwise extremely entertaining and informative ride.

Doherty's book is an extremely entertaining and informative ride.

One of the great sins in book reviewing is reviewing the book the author didn't actually write, but the one the reviewer wishes he had. So in a sense mine is a sinful critique. But the biggest objection to be made to *Radicals for Capitalism* revolves around what the book *isn't*. In its 700-plus pages of text and footnotes, Doherty doesn't pick a single philosophical fight, at least not with fellow libertarians. This is Big Tent intellectual history, where everybody's point of view is aired and every member gets a portrait on the clubhouse wall.

In some cases, as with the chapter dealing with Rand, one could argue that Doherty lets the damning facts speak for themselves. But, overall, Doherty has made a clear choice to offer a just-the-facts rendition of libertarian history. He uses what are clearly keen analytical tools to explain what the Rands, Rothbards, Miseses, and others had to say and how they related to one another, but he puts those tools on the shelf when it comes time to distinguish between the arguments of these largely "peculiar people" (his words). As an editorial choice this is entirely valid, perhaps even laudable: After all, libertarians, like conservatives, have no shortage of options if they're looking for doctrinal squabbles. And libertarians, unlike conservatives, have lacked—until now—a straightforward history of their movement and tradition. This lacuna is no doubt attributable in part to the fact that libertarians often have revolutionary fire in their hearts and, like all revolutionaries, believe the past is a pile of dry bones offering little save a foundation upon which the New Order must be built.

Even so, Doherty seems at times eager to lean over backward toward ideological ecumenicalism, letting even the most peculiar libertarians have a seat at the table, no matter how inconvenient they might be to an intellectual movement fighting for mainstream credibility. Occasionally he does roll his eyes at some excesses, but never really chooses sides.

Obviously, every political movement has its own problems, conservatism included. But if you had to identify libertarianism's Achilles' heel, it would almost certainly be its tolerance for zealots, purists, mavericks, and, well, whack-jobs. Since the libertarians don't see themselves as Left or Right, one can't use the phrase "no enemies on the left [or right]" to explain their stance. But "love me, love my whack-job" gets close to the heart of it.

The revolutionary ardor of libertarianism combines with its fetishization of

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Mon./July 30	AT SEA			morning/afternoon seminars
Tues./July 31	Glacier Bay	10:00AM	4:00PM	morning seminar late-night poolside smoker
Wed./Aug. 1	Juneau, AK	7:00AM	8:00PM	evening cocktail reception
Thur./Aug. 2	Sitka, AK	8:00AM	5:00PM	late-night poolside smoker
Fri./Aug. 3	Ketchikan, AK	7:00AM	1:00PM	afternoon seminars evening cocktail reception
Sat./Aug. 4	Victoria, B.C.	6:00PM	Midnight	morning seminar afternoon seminar
Sun./Aug. 5	Seattle	7:00AM		

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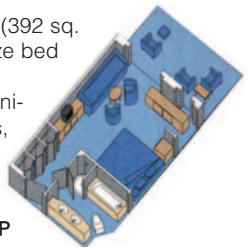

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DOUBLE OCCUPANCY RATE: $ 4,299 P/P
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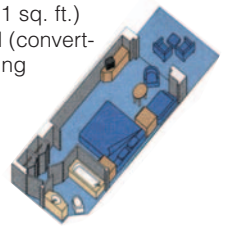
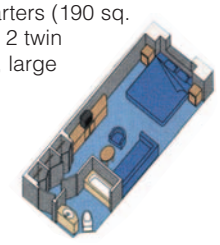
DELUXE OUTSIDE Spacious cabin (241 sq. ft.) features private verandah, queen-size bed (convertible to 2 twin beds), bath with shower, sitting area, mini-bar, tv, refrigerator, and floor-to-ceiling windows.



Categories VA / VB / VC
DOUBLE OCCUPANCY RATE: $ 3,699 P/P
SINGLE OCCUPANCY RATE: $ 5,999

LARGE OCEAN VIEW Comfortable quarters (190 sq. ft.) features queen-size bed (convertible to 2 twin beds), bathtub with shower, sitting area, tv, large ocean-view windows.

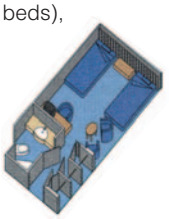
ONE LEFT!



Category D
DOUBLE OCCUPANCY RATE: $ 2,999 P/P
SINGLE OCCUPANCY RATE: $ 4,199

LARGE INSIDE Cozy but ample cabin quarters (185 sq. ft.) features queen-size bed (convertible to 2 twin beds), bathtub with shower, sitting area, tv.

SOLD OUT!



Category K
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rationalism and consistency to make a soft spot in the libertarian heart for intellectual extremism. Murray Rothbard, the genius father figure of modern libertarianism, converted to anarcho-capitalism from classical liberalism when someone asked him: If the social contract can justify a small government, "why can't society also agree to have a government build steel mills and have price controls and whatever? At that point I realized that the laissez-faire position is terribly inconsistent, and I either had to go on to anarchism or become a statist." Now, there are good answers to this social-contract question—though obviously none of them satisfactory to Rothbard. The point is that only something akin to inconsistency-phobia would force someone to believe that one must endorse a Soviet Five-Year Plan if one is willing to enjoy the protection of police or courts. But Rothbard was a highly unusual type: He refused to vote for president for fear of being conscripted into "compulsory jury slavery." Indeed, while Doherty treats him lovingly, he notes that Rothbard was a man of "crippling phobias" of such things as "traveling, bridges, and planes."

Or consider the Libertarian party, once the repository of libertarian dreams of social transformation and now little more than an ideological chum bucket for the political refuse of the American two-party system. As Doherty notes, there is now a high wall of separation between libertarianism's best and brightest intellectuals and policy experts and the party that ostensibly speaks for them. Gary Greenberg, the founder of the New York State LP, tells Doherty that any attempt to be relevant to electoral politics amounts to "selling out." The "very idea of worrying about the LP becoming a major force is essentially selling out," he explains, "because hardcore libertarianism *has no mass constituency*. And if you are constantly covering it up you are just playing games. There is no mass constituency for seven-year-old heroin dealers to be able to buy tanks with their profits from prostitution, and once you face that the LP has to decide: Are they compromising their principles for votes, or are they running candidates for the opportunity to educate people?"

Just so.

The contrast between this sort of thinking and that found among mainstream conservatives could not be more stark. The prevailing position of the Buckleyite Right over the decades has been to lend support to the most conservative candidate electable. And, if that candidate is elected, to applaud or criticize when appropriate. The libertarian zest for purity and the ardor—particularly among its younger or more boisterous members—to mock and criticize the values of those most amenable to their message have made it virtually impossible for a mainstream politician to cast himself as a champion of libertarianism. Meanwhile, the most successful libertarian politicians have proudly called themselves conservatives.

Unfortunately Doherty doesn't spend very much time or energy discussing the dynamic and symbiotic relationship between libertarians and conservatives. This sometimes gives the story a certain Rosencrantz & Guildenstern feel, as Doherty focuses on minor characters while giving short shrift to the avowed conservatives—many of them at National Review—who actually did much of the heavy lifting in the effort to popularize limited government.

This is forgivable, because Doherty's aim is to highlight the fact that libertarianism has a story all its own to tell. But that story is deeply instructive about the weaknesses of libertarian political strategy. Bill Buckley worked assiduously to disassociate his brand of conservatism from the swampier varieties contending for power and influence. This took a unique combination of talents, from intellectual openness to critics—Rothbard himself attended NR editorial meetings as late as 1960, despite his sometimes vicious criticisms of the magazine's "clerical fascism"—to sometimes painful separations from friends and former allies. Chambers's overly harsh, but ultimately necessary, defenestration of Ayn Rand is just one such example.

Hence it should be no surprise that libertarianism's greatest victories have come from its ability to persuade not the general public but conservatives themselves. The hot tea of libertarian radicalism is cooled in the saucer of American conservatism and made palatable. Today, libertarian economics are essentially indistinguishable from conservative economics. The Club for Growth, the Republican Liberty Caucus, and similar organs speak for "economic conservatives"—which, for all practical purposes, means libertarians. To be sure, they don't advocate the legality of seven-year-old heroin dealers; nor do their hearts necessarily swell with pride over every Republican policy. Conservatism's relationship to the GOP is quite analogous to libertarianism's relationship to conservatism, in that both are punctuated with frequent disappointment and frustration. A burning question left unanswered by Doherty is whether libertarian strategy is an inevitable outgrowth of libertarian ideology. Is libertarianism capable of saying no?

No conservative should commit to a policy without first consulting the libertarian position. Indeed, once conservatism forgets to ask, "Should the government really be doing this?" it will have ceased conserving what is best about conservatism. Hence *Radicals for Capitalism* should be required reading not just for libertarians, but for their conservative comrades-in-arms as well. **NR**

LULLABY

I sang to each of my children
When sleep came too slowly,
The words of a mystery
In a haunting minor tune:
Open the door softly,
I've something to tell you, dear.
Open it up no wider
Than the crack upon the floor.
Open the door softly,
I've something to tell you, dear.
I learned it from a street singer
Who promised me the rest
As soon as he could remember.
Now I hear he has died.
So I may never hear
Who knocked, who was inside,
What one had to say and why
The other would not open.
And not one of my children
Entranced by the lullaby
Ever turned in my arms
To ask what was unspoken
On the edge of oblivion.

—DANIEL MARK EPSTEIN

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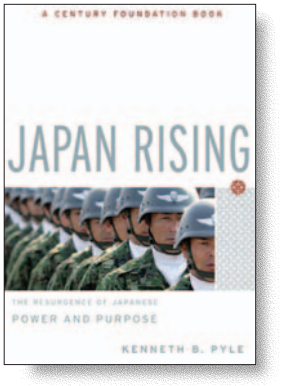
Japan Again



Japan Rising: The Resurgence of Japanese Power and Purpose, by Kenneth B. Pyle (PublicAffairs, 448 pp., $29.95)

DAN BLUMENTHAL

Kenneth Pyle, the dean of American Japan hands, has written this book at a critical juncture in Asian international relations. Tokyo is intensely debating its strategic future, as its neighbors and its key ally in Washington watch with interest and some apprehension. Tokyo's resurgence is replete with contradictions. For example, Japan has embraced the promotion of universal values as a core component of its foreign policy—yet it is willing to endure international condemnation for denying that it forced women to become sex slaves during World War II. Japan has been pacifist for 60 years, but is still regarded as militaristic by much of Asia. Pyle's book helps explain the massive turnabouts that Japan has made in its foreign policy over the past century, and why Japan's neighbors regard its recent foreign-policy readjustment with a measure of suspicion.

Pyle builds his thesis around a pair of central propositions: First, Japan is and always has been "realist" in its orientation, seeking to expand its influence and power at every turn. And second, Japan shapes and reshapes its domestic institutions to carry out its realist foreign policy. Thus, when the Sino-centric order was breaking down—to be replaced by Western imperialism—the Meiji Restoration allowed Japan to adopt the Western technology, institutions, and practices that would secure Japan's rightful place in the regional hierarchy. This effort culminated in Japan's victories in the Sino–Japanese and Russo–Japanese wars, which allowed Tokyo to distance itself from the Asian powers it had surpassed and ally with Great Britain, the hegemon at the time.

As Anglo-American international liberalism replaced the imperialist system that broke down during World War I, the Japanese tried to adjust. But, as Tokyo concluded that the real purpose of the new order was to contain Japan's ambitions, and as the great powers failed to enforce the new system anyway, Japan saw the opportunity to increase its influence in continental Asia. As liberalism broke down entirely and the world descended into a Nazi-led "New World Order," Japan followed suit, instituting militaristic and fascistic domestic institutions to support an imperialist foreign policy throughout Asia.

During the Cold War, Japan reconstituted itself as the "Venice of Asia": eschewing military force (taking advantage of the security guarantee provided by the United States) and reshaping its domestic institutions in line with a policy of state-guided economic growth. After years of sustained economic growth, this policy reached its apex in the 1980s, when such proud Japanese nationalists as Sony's Akio Morita announced to the world that Japan's model of economic growth was superior to America's.

The post–Cold War period was defined by uncertainty and flux in Asia. Japan was at a loss, with no defining regional order from which to take its cues, and fell into a period of economic stagnation and a crisis of confidence. But the rise of Chinese power and North Korea's reckless militarism provided the impetus for Tokyo to reform yet again. Japan elected a charismatic prime minister in Junichiro Koizumi, who implemented wide-ranging

Mr. Blumenthal is resident fellow in Asian studies at the American Enterprise Institute.

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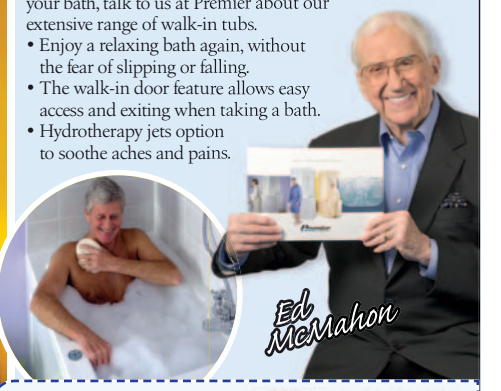

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domestic and foreign-policy reforms.

Domestically, Koizumi declared war against Japan's factional system of politics, as well as the bureaucracy's grip on policy. These moves allowed him greater flexibility to reshape foreign policy in a pro-American direction. Koizumi dispatched logistic and support vessels to back the U.S. effort in Afghanistan, and subsequently deployed reconstruction troops to Iraq. He initiated a debate about changing Japan's pacifist constitution, and entered an agreement for ballistic-missile cooperation with the U.S. that will ultimately necessitate lifting the Japanese ban on collective self-defense.

In short, Koizumi restored honor to a depressed Japan after a decade of economic doldrums, political stagnation, and international-relations embarrassment. Perhaps even more significant, Koizumi signed Japan on to a global agenda with the United States that includes democracy promotion. Embracing universal democratic values is a serious departure from foreign-policy practice for Japan, a country that Pyle argues never had a sense of universal values, and always followed a narrow definition of its self-interest.

There are some unresolved tensions in Pyle's book. For example, his heavy reliance on international-relations theorists' definitions of "realism" renders this a term without much meaning. How can it be realist for Tokyo to attack America in World War II, knowing it will almost certainly be defeated, and realist for Tokyo to eschew military force altogether and rely completely on others for its defense? It is more accurate to describe Japan as a country that assesses its strategic environment and then opportunistically presses its position as far it can go—sometimes with disastrous consequences, as in World War II, and sometimes triumphantly, as in the Cold War. Attempting to shoehorn this behavior into a theoretical framework oversimplifies Japanese strategic behavior.

The other unresolved question the book poses is about the nature and effects of Japan's cultural identity. Pyle argues that, in each period, Japan's adaptation of others' values and practices came at the cost of national and cultural pride. Wounded pride certainly explains some of Japan's strange behavior, such as pursuing a policy of continental dominance and attempting to throw the British and Americans out of Asia. But is there an immutable Japanese national and cultural identity that chafes under elite policymaking, in sometimes suicidal ways—and if so, is this really the source of Japanese foreign policy? If the answer to these questions is yes, then Pyle's thesis about Japanese "realism" is wrong. (A "realist" Japan would be motivated to reform and resurge in response to China's rise—the classic realist attitude that focuses on fear and security.)

Pyle is at his best in describing the shrewd prime minister Shigeru Yoshida, whose post–World War II strategy guided Japan until the Soviet Union fell. Yoshida was so determined to minimize Japan's international-security commitments that he secretly prodded the Japanese Left to stir up unrest when Secretary of State John Foster Dulles visited to press his vision of an Asian NATO. Don't push us too far, Yoshida was saying, or we might not be the center of power countering Soviet expansionism that you wish us to be.

As Pyle points out, Yoshida's strategy may have benefited Japan at the time—it had no collective-security obligations, and could focus on becoming an economic powerhouse. But the absence of a NATO-style collective-security organization in Asia today is dangerous. There is no strong organization with a shared sense of values and purposes to mediate outstanding territorial issues, work out ways to share resources, or soothe historical grievances. Regional forums have become battlegrounds for Sino–Japanese, Sino–American, or Japanese–South Korean competition.

Meanwhile, as the global economic and strategic center of gravity has shifted to Asia, American policy has not kept up. Pyle asserts that the relationships between China, the U.S., and Japan (I would add India) will shape Asia's future in accord with two major trends. The first is increased economic growth and integration, technological dynamism, and the growth of regional forums; the second is a competition for influence and power against a backdrop of historical animosities and unsettled territorial claims, all in the absence of strong, integrating institutions. Which trend triumphs depends in large measure on continued U.S. hegemony in the region: Left to their own devices, the Asian powers will operate in a competitive Hobbesian world of "self-help," the outcome of which could be disastrous. U.S. leadership will be necessary to build a region where the powers cooperate to promote security, economic development, and human rights.

Washington's policy goals in Asia make its recent refusal to accept a Japanese proposal for a regional democracy forum all the more counterproductive. Japan is actually taking the lead in articulating a positive strategic vision—and, very uncharacteristically, a vision based on universal values. As in Europe, a democratic alliance has a better chance of enduring than the alphabet soup of institutions that currently exist. Unless and until a collective-security organization is formed, Pyle stresses, Washington's hegemonic presence will be needed to ensure free and open trade, promote democracy, and make sure no dominant Asian power emerges to undo a peaceful and prosperous regional order. Since Japan will be crucial to Washington's continued preeminence in the region, policymakers should be as attentive to the trials and tribulations of Japan's rise as they are to China's. Pyle provides us with some needed context, as Japan continues to find its way. **NR**

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The Great Professor

William Empson: Volume II: Against the Christians, by John Haffenden (Oxford, 824 pp., $65)

JOHN WILSON

FORTY years ago, when the United States was embroiled in an unpopular war and President Lyndon Baines Johnson was being savagely and wittily caricatured in the pages of the upstart *New York Review of Books*, I stood in a college bookstore hungrily eyeing the section then quaintly known as "Literary Criticism." I had enough money for one book only, and I settled on a New Directions paperback, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*. I knew nothing about the author, William Empson, but the insolent intelligence of the title (and the cover design with its large numeral 7) drew me like a magnet.

"I believe it is the most imaginative account of reading ever printed," John Crowe Ransom said, and Empson "the closest and most resourceful reader that poetry has yet publicly had." High praise indeed for a book published when the author was only 24, but not altogether hyperbolic. And if—like the Cambridge examiners who gave Empson the highest possible marks on his English Tripos—I wasn't always sure what he was driving at, I was dazzled. At the moment I turned the last page, a life spent explicating poems and novels and plays seemed entirely plausible.

Born to a landowning Yorkshire family in 1906, Empson came of age just as the academic study of English literature had begun to flourish. Intellectual energies that had once been devoted exclusively to the interpretation of Scripture or to the texts that had survived from ancient Greece and Rome were now brought to bear on the vernacular. Gifted in mathematics, Empson could easily have gone in that direction or to the neighboring precincts of science, but he chose English. He was awarded a fellowship after completing his undergraduate studies and appeared to be headed for a brilliant academic career.

Seven weeks later, however, he was dismissed. He'd had a lover in his rooms, a German woman—like many of his Oxbridge contemporaries, Empson had sexual relations with men as well as women—and, more scandalously still, was found to have condoms in his possession. Stripped of his academic standing, he spent some time in London writing *Seven Types of Ambiguity* before taking up a three-year appointment to teach in Japan. After an interval back in England, he taught in China for two years, drawing on that experience for his wartime stint with the BBC Overseas Service in London. He spent another five years in China after the war, before settling at the University of Sheffield, where he taught until his retirement in 1971. A series of visiting professorships followed, in Canada and the U.S. He died in 1984.

Very well. An unusually distinguished literary critic, with a stack of posthumously published volumes in addition to the ones that came out during his lifetime (*Some Versions of Pastoral* in 1935, *The Structure of Complex Words* in 1951, and *Milton's God* in 1961), and himself a good poet. Still, with that said, Empson seems a marginal candidate for a biography, let alone the double-decker life-and-works that John Haffenden has produced, along with an edition of Empson's *Selected Letters*, all three volumes handsomely and sturdily bound in the old Oxford style.

And yet with the biography complete, a fair-minded reader must acknowledge that Haffenden needed every single chapter. The second volume picks up the narrative at the BBC in World War II, and though it runs to almost 700 pages (not counting notes), the pace never flags.

Empson is an irresistible protagonist. With his weird beard, his cigarette holder, his customary squalor, his sexual proclivities (he *wanted* to be cuckolded, so to speak), his drunken follies and his contagious high spirits, his public persona alternating between shyness and ferocious intellectual combat, and above all his light-speed intelligence, he makes the standard-model absent-minded professor look like the man in the gray flannel suit.

In 1997, speaking at the funeral of Empson's wife, Hetta, an unforgettable character in her own right, the novelist Fay Weldon recalled Empson as well:

> And William, awesome in a different way: *Seven Types of Ambiguity* reckoned just about the cleverest man in the world, there in the flesh, at Studio House. When you first met him he'd look at you hopefully, and engage you in conversation; and then his face would fall, he'd look disappointed, somehow or other one had failed intellectually; it happened to everyone, they said. After that it would be just down to the Roebuck for shove-halfpenny, and a talk about the merits of Heinz v. Campbell chicken soup.

Ah, intellectuals. Twenty years ago, Paul Johnson published a bestselling book simply called *Intellectuals*. Penetrating, compulsively readable, and often wickedly funny, the book nevertheless was marred by a serious flaw. Like many conservative commentators who write about intellectuals (most of them, by the way, patently intellectuals themselves), Johnson treated the breed as if they were somehow distinct from the common run of humanity, as if they had been given an extra portion of Original Sin. Did you know, for example, that intellectuals are particularly vulnerable to the seductions of violence? No good to object that some are and some aren't, that the thugs who attacked my son and a female companion in Chicago last year weren't carrying the latest issue of *The New York Review of Books*, and so on.

No, don't bother to protest: Johnson & Co. aren't listening—they're proceeding with the indictment. Intellectuals are snobs, they want to meddle in other people's lives (ever spend time in a small town?), all leading to the conclusion: "Beware intellectuals." By all means. And beware rednecks. Beware people who sneer at "book-learning," who contrast "head knowledge" with "heart knowledge," who don't like questions. Beware intellectuals who tell you that intellectuals are the root of all evil and who trumpet the virtues of "ordinary people."

What makes the foibles of intellectuals legitimately worthy of note is the ironic *contrast* between their knowledge and their performance, a contrast that—far from distinguishing them from everyone else—highlights the universal human condition as described by St. Paul: "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do."

And that leads us to the subtitle of this second volume of Haffenden's biography,

Mr. Wilson is editor of *Books & Culture*.

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"Against the Christians," which rightly homes in on the *idée fixe* of Empson's maturity: his loathing for Christianity and his conviction that a mafia of "neo-Christian torture-worshippers" (for so he regarded the prevailing understanding of Christ's death on the cross) was taking over his profession. That is why, as Haffenden puts it, Empson "became so intent on rescuing literature from Christian readings."

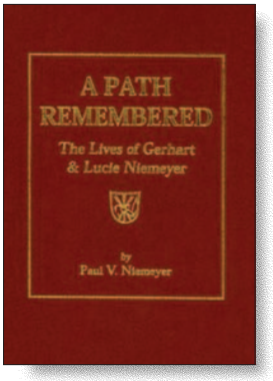
The ironies here are thick indeed. Even as Empson was railing against the hegemony of the "neo-Christians," England was fast becoming a post-Christian nation, while the newly reigning fashions in literary study (fashions that swept Empson's brilliant work aside) were programmatically hostile to Christianity. And it is painful to watch a critic as acute as Empson betraying his own gifts, "rescuing" some of his favorite writers—Donne, Herbert, Hopkins, et al.—from the stain of Christian piety by insisting that, in some instances without conscious awareness, they were writing against the grain of belief, a line of argument that reached its culmination in *Milton's God*.

But not all the ironies cut back against Empson. Many Christians—not just those on the fringe with John Shelby Spong—have been rethinking the doctrine of atonement in the light of the full Christian tradition, in the process rejecting some of the distorted images of the Christian God that had repelled Empson.

Haffenden himself is sympathetic to his subject, sympathetic to a fault, but he is also an honorable scholar, and his scrupulous account of Empson's life provides ample evidence for readings contrary to his own. Thus, while he praises Empson's independence and his "rage against all modes of reactionary authoritarianism," Haffenden quotes enough from his subject and others who knew him for the reader to conclude that, like most of us, he was a tangle of contradictions, quite capable, for instance, of complacently uttering rubbishy generalizations about "the Japanese mind" or "the Chinese mind," in some ways snobbish, yes—his comments about the profession of journalism are telling!—but in other ways not at all, a teacher who loved what he taught. In the idiom of the religion he hated, a sinner in need of grace.

The result is one of the finest literary biographies in recent memory, a fit epigraph for which might read: "What a strange creature is man." **NR**

A Don's Delight



A Path Remembered: The Lives of Gerhart & Lucie Niemeyer, by Paul V. Niemeyer (ISI, 420 pp., $40)

WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.

PAUSE for one minute (*just* one minute) to admire the book itself, never mind the text. It is something of sheer beauty, glossy paper cloth-bound, with 200-plus photographs and illustrations. It is as fine an example of modern book craft as I have seen, and it tells the story of Gerhart and Lucie Niemeyer. Gerhart died in 1997 after teaching at Notre Dame for 37 years. He wrote ten books and a thousand essays and reviews. After leaving Germany, he spent, with wife and growing family, time in Spain, then on to Princeton, the State Department, Oglethorpe University, Cambridge, and Notre Dame. He was probably the most influential conservative don in America.

It is fine that there is now this volume, so successful in recalling his life and career.

The first paragraphs tell the story of the meeting of Gerhart and Lucie. Both, in their early twenties, were members of solid German families. Indeed the author, circuit court judge Paul Niemeyer, gives us a quaintly readable, illustrated account of the *thirteen* generations preceding Gerhart's. He first laid eyes on his future wife while she was flexing ballet shoes as a star young dancer. They married, felt the hot breath of Hitler, went to Spain and, finally, to America, where they raised five children and outgrew the socialism and atheism of their freethinking youth. Gerhart, when he went to Notre Dame, had emerged as a lively philosophical and political scholar. His impact as a teacher was critical to generations of young men and women who learned from him, and felt the intensity of his intellectual and spiritual benevolence. The finely wrought volume tells of his posts as a writer, teacher, and lecturer, and the reader quickly understands the communion with him felt by his students and friends.

Niemeyer was a comprehensive student of Communism, and an active and resourceful opponent of the Soviet enterprise. He was the foreign-affairs adviser to Barry Goldwater during the 1964 campaign, advising the community at large on appropriate policies to contain that great, 70-year blight on history; and he lived to see the squalid end of the Soviet enterprise.

In his seventies, he was ordained an Episcopal priest, though later he joined the Catholic Church. The exchange of letters with his dear friend the Episcopal bishop who ordained him tells the tale of a disappointed friend, and of the special pain brought on by denominational estrangement. The pages recording the event are one more compelling story in the large story of the German couple who lived and loved in an adopted country.

I must record this, as a close friend of Gerhart Niemeyer: I never met a man more wholesomely taken by humor. I remember telling him one story apprehensively, because it was inherently and necessarily smutty. My daring was greeted with his Falstaffian understanding of the humorous side of life at every level.

Reminiscing having set in, I go on to record that I never, *never* came upon (in my circles) a hearth in which music figured so prominently. The family had an ensemble of sorts, age seven up. Late in life, he purchased a harpsichord. The devotional side of life, in Niemeyer, moved hand in hand with the appreciation of music and humor, all of which served to accentuate the gravity with which he deplored not only tyranny, but profanity. How gratifying that the story is here told, and outsiders can have exposure to the life of this wonderful man, and the woman he adored. **NR**

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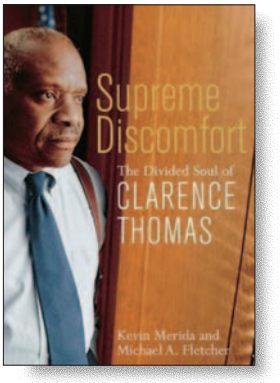
Supreme Bias



Supreme Discomfort: The Divided Soul of Clarence Thomas, by Kevin Merida and Michael Fletcher (Doubleday, 422 pp., $26.95)

EDWARD WHELAN

In their new biography, the *Washington Post*'s Kevin Merida and Michael Fletcher examine, largely through the prism of race, the life of Justice Clarence Thomas. Between the opening and closing chapters—both of which explore the enmity that many blacks hold toward Thomas—*Supreme Discomfort* provides a mostly chronological narrative of Thomas's life, including his upbringing in Georgia, his years at Holy Cross and Yale Law School, his "meteoric rise" in the Reagan administration, and the searing 1991 confirmation hearings on his nomination to the Supreme Court. It also includes seven chapters on various aspects of his years as a justice.

Merida and Fletcher purport to offer an evenhanded, indeed empathetic portrayal of the man they say "has turned himself into the most successful victim in America." But as this jab illustrates, they repeatedly and pervasively slant their account against Thomas on matters both small and large.

Thomas's connection to his birthplace—Pin Point, Ga.—was, Merida and Fletcher note, "tenuous at best" because he moved to Savannah when he was six. Yet the authors fault him for rarely visiting Pin Point and for being "too far removed from the day-to-day struggles of this community." Thomas's youth, they say, "was defined more by the advantages afforded him than by the hard times he had to bear—a point often skirted in the telling of his story." Ah, yes: Having his father abandon the family when he was a baby, having his family's house burn down when he was six, then being left by his mother to live with his grandparents in a neighborhood with "shootings [and] ice-pick stabbings," and enduring (and watching his grandfather endure) the belittling condescension of Savannah's black elite—how could all that matter compared with living in a middle-class household and having "nine years of parochial school education"? Why, even for Thomas to resent how the black elite treated his grandfather is to "speak[] sneeringly of the leading lights in his community"! Doesn't he know his place?

The authors repeatedly and pervasively slant their account against Thomas on matters both small and large.

The authors' rehashing of Anita Hill's allegations at Thomas's confirmation hearings is especially one-sided. Although they state in their prologue that "no definitive truth about what happened between them has emerged since the hearings," the reader will have no doubt where Merida and Fletcher stand. In piling speculation upon speculation, they even recount an anecdote involving a family dinner three years after the hearing in which—according to a journalist guest who had met Thomas on a few occasions—Thomas mentioned one of Hill's allegations and then laughed in a manner the guest thought lacked the requisite "righteous indignation": "It was almost as if he were laughing because he got away with something," the guest comments. Merida and Fletcher distance themselves from the

Mr. Whelan is president of the Ethics and Public Policy Center and a regular contributor to National Review Online's Bench Memos blog.

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guest's extravagant inference at the same time that they somehow see fit to include it.

The book's biographical narrative of Thomas's ascent holds interest, notwithstanding the authors' thinly veiled bias. The same cannot be said for *Supreme Discomfort*'s chapters on his Supreme Court years. One problem is that Merida and Fletcher appear to have only a crudely political understanding of the Supreme Court. For example, in discussing Thomas's conclusion that the Constitution does not address abortion—and thus leaves to the political processes whether or not abortion should be permitted—they mistakenly charge Thomas with expressing "clear opposition to abortion." Their description of the originalist jurisprudential principles that Thomas embraces likewise falsely contends that "in practice [originalism] produces what is best described as conservative legal outcomes." In fact, in practice originalism recognizes that the Constitution leaves the vast bulk of policy issues to the people to decide through their elected representatives, who are free to adopt conservative or liberal positions (or any other position on the political spectrum) and to revisit those positions as they see fit.

Merida and Fletcher also make the naked—and, to me, very surprising—charge that Thomas's judicial opinions are often regarded as "not up to snuff." Much as some critics may disagree with the substance of Thomas's analyses, it would be implausible to maintain that his opinions are not well crafted. The authors also spend a full chapter on the oh-so-tired and trivial matter of why Thomas rarely asks questions at oral argument.

Merida and Fletcher, who are both black, do offer some interesting insights on race issues, including class-based divisions among blacks and the tradition of black conservatism. But there is little reason to believe that they have provided a fair and accurate portrait of Thomas. As they note, Thomas replies to scurrilous charges that he is a puppet of Justice Scalia by joking that "I rarely see him, so he must have a chip in my brain." One imagines that he would have a similar response to their claim to see into his supposedly "divided soul." The authors lament that Thomas never granted their persistent requests to interview him. From the evidence of their bias against him, Thomas's decision was yet another sound judgment by an outstanding jurist. **NR**

■ FILM ■

True Lies

ROSS DOUTHAT

From *The Great Train Robbery* down to *Ocean's 11*, nothing tickles the moviegoing public like watching someone pull off the perfect crime—and no crime is quite so smooth and glamorous, so free from muss and fuss, as the artful grift. It's a shame, then, that real-life con men tend to be such a sordid lot, winkling widows out of their retirement funds, cozying up to lonely housewives, or seducing middle managers with false promises of Nigerian millions. Most grifter movies are implausible improvements on this less-than-cinematic reality, from Robert Redford and Paul Newman's glamorous turn in *The Sting* to David Mamet's chilly, hermetic entertainments, where everyone's swindling everyone else.

There are a few true-to-life flim-flam men, though, whose cons are the stuff that films are made of. Frank Abagnale, for instance, spent most of the 1960s putting one (and then another and another) over on banks and airlines, two industries that inspire absolutely nobody's pity, and ended up immortalized by Steven Spielberg and Leonardo DiCaprio in *Catch Me If You Can*. Just as Abagnale was winding up his career, a writer named Clifford Irving got busy selling a fraudulent "autobiography" of a man he had never met, Howard Hughes, to a mark that was practically begging to be conned: the New York publishing industry. Irving got nearly a million bucks out of the deal, and then a jail sentence when Hughes denounced him as the fraud he was; now he, like Abagnale, has been rewarded with the Hollywood treatment, in Lasse Hallström's *The Hoax*.

I haven't seen many of the much-lauded movies that Hallström made in his native Sweden, but I *have* seen most of the glossy, lousy Oscar bait he churned out for Miramax back when that studio was still run by the award-happy Weinstein brothers, and it's hard to imagine that the man responsible for *Chocolat*, *The Cider House Rules*, and *The Shipping News* could ever make a film worth watching.

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The Hoax doesn't redeem these upper-middlebrow embarrassments, but it's at least a mark on the other side of the ledger, offering—for most of its running time, at least—a breezy, buoyant entertainment, one that's shot through with just enough darkness to keep the audience unsettled, but not so much that the film falls victim to self-seriousness.

Hallström is served well by a stellar cast, which includes Marcia Gay Harden as Irving's Germanic, hippie wife; Julie Delpy as his wannabe-actress mistress; Alfred Molina as his harried, ingenuous sidekick, Dick Suskind; and Hope Davis, Stanley Tucci, and Zeljko Ivanek as his publishing-industry marks. One of the great delights of the movie is watching the latter three at work, with each actor offering up a different veneer—steely unsentimentality for Davis's editor, corporate slickness for Tucci's publishing baron, pseudo-intellectual pomposity for Ivanek's *Life* magazine editor—that turns out to conceal the same naked, childish greed beneath.

Richard Gere in The Hoax

MIRAMAX FILMS

But it's Richard Gere, playing Irving under the cover of curls and sideburns and a faint New York accent (the better to impersonate a novelist who aspired to the company of Norman Mailer and Philip Roth), who makes the movie go down as smoothly as it does. Gere is an underrated actor who will grow less underrated as his good looks are worn away by age: Like Gene Hackman, he plays the same part nearly every time, but always finds something new in it, and here he takes the smooth-operator role and gives it ragged edges, playing a charmer who's always teetering on the brink of disarray. With Molina's Suskind—tongue-tied, decent, uxorious—as his partner and his foil, Gere leaps from lie to lie, deception to deception, growing ever more outrageous as he realizes that it's precisely his most outrageous claims that convince his marks to take him seriously.

He's in over his head almost from the beginning, but fortunately, it isn't until the third act that the movie finds itself floundering there with him. Spielberg's *Catch Me If You Can* managed to be both a conman flick and a coming-of-age story, with DiCaprio's Abagnale eventually accepting his punishment as the price of adulthood and finding a surrogate father in the cop who tracked him down. Irving, though, is deep in middle age, too old to learn lessons or new tricks, and so the movie zigs and zags in search of a suitably serious conclusion—now playing up the descent-into-madness angle, as Irving dons a Hughes outfit and half-convinces himself that he really is taking dictation from the billionaire; now suggesting that its protagonist is just a pawn in a decades-old duel between Hughes and Richard Nixon, with Watergate shoehorned in for good measure.

In reality, it's precisely the unseriousness and unimportance of Irving's con that makes most of the movie's running time such fun. If his crime wasn't exactly victimless, neither were his victims seriously hurt: Hughes's reputation was barely dented by the scam (if anything, it added luster to his legend), the money was returned in full, and Irving himself, after spending 17 months in prison, went on to write several bestsellers and retire to Aspen, Colo. It's a story made for Hollywood, with all the thrill of a good crime and none of the unpleasant consequences, and the movie is truest to its source material when it sends its heroes kiting through the country in Irving's new convertible, careless and gleeful, secure in the knowledge that being a con man in America means never having to say you're sorry. **NR**

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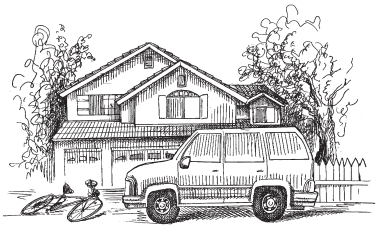
■ THE STRAGGLER ■

Single-Parent Blues



JOHN DERBYSHIRE

An old Scottish ditty complains that: "There's nae luck aboot the hoose, / There's nae luck at a' / There's little pleasure in the hoose, / When oor gude man's awa'."

I can't speak to precisely that, but the Straggler household has been in a sad way these past few days owing to the absence of Mrs. Straggler. A family crisis in China had to be dealt with, so off went Mom, leaving Dad and the kids to care for themselves.

Mom did her best to see us through the ordeal. She spent the couple of days before her departure cooking up meals in woks and pots, sealing them up in neat plastic containers, and storing them in the family freezer. Detailed instructions were written down for expected deliveries, bills to be paid, garbage-pickup schedules, contents of school lunchboxes, the car-pooling of kids to their extracurricular activities, school concerts, grocery re-supply, houseplant watering, dog feeding, the sorting and saving of Mom's mail. Dad, whose household-management abilities Mom holds in no very high esteem—in no esteem at all, actually—was subjected to quizzes and drills to make sure it all sank in.

On the day of departure we all went together to JFK airport. (Which a friend of mine, the most committed Kennedy-hater on the Eastern Seaboard, insists on referring to by its former name of Idlewild.) Mom's flight was delayed, so we mooched around the featureless stores and restaurants of Terminal One for a while, unwilling to let go. At last there was nothing for it but to see Mom off. We all hugged, exchanged terms of endearment, and ran through a final household-management check. Then off went Mom.

We could see her going through Security. She had that flustered look she has when dealing with unfamiliar situations, the look that gives me a mighty urge to run to her side—which, here, I couldn't. Through all the Security nonsense at last, she turned to wave. We all waved back, the kids jumping up and down to be seen over the crowds of travelers resignedly divesting themselves of belts and shoes. Then she disappeared into the tunnel behind Security that leads to the gates. We were left looking at each other, and at the prospect of at least two Mom-less weeks.

I suppose every family has its own philosophy for coping with the world beyond itself. Ours is isolationist and defensive: Us against It. I do not have an easy conscience about this. Anglo-Saxon civilization should be more broadly social, more hospitable to the "little platoons" that guarantee our liberty. The intensely family-centered model belongs to low-trust cultures—Sicily, the East—where the citizen can depend reliably on nothing but his family, everything beyond being a power or money racket.

However, Mom comes from one of those very cultures, and Dad is an unclubbable loner, so we peer suspiciously out at the world from behind the family ramparts. It doesn't help that we are not merely a nuclear family, but actually an ionic one, with no electrons in orbit. I mean, we have no relatives closer than 3,000 miles away. Dad's family is on the other side of the Atlantic; Mom's, across the Pacific. There are friends and neighbors of course, good-hearted charitable Americans all, and eager to help, but it's not the same. Now, with a key family member absent, we huddle together like sheep in a blizzard. The kids are strangely quiet.

Household management proves more daunting than Dad thought. The "nae luck" clause kicks in right away, the son falling to a sensational bilious attack the day after Mom left. The poor kid was throwing up all day. Take him to the doctor? It didn't seem to rise to that level. My parents never took me to a doctor for throwing up, nor for anything much short of a fractured limb. Kids throw up, it's a thing they do. Should I medicate him? I scanned Mom's medicine cabinet clueless. Nothing suggested itself. At last the boy fell asleep. I went to bed myself—alone, for the first time I can recall, in the parental bed. It seemed big and cold. Perhaps I shall sleep in a chair for the duration. Next day the son was better, though still subdued. We are all subdued.

We call Mom. She is safe and well, just horribly far away. I succeed in heating up one of her frozen dinners in the microwave. Cooking the accompanying rice, however, I get something wrong, and the rice comes out wet and mealy. The kids are sarcastic about this, but mutedly so. The family dog, who of course knows that something is amiss, eagerly helps dispose of the failed rice, perhaps in the doggish belief that such acts of cooperation will return things to normal.

Next day is bottle collection by the town's recycling squad—a thing Mom drummed into me, but that I somehow manage to forget anyway. I hear the truck, but it is out of sight before I can get to it with my bottles. This does not bode well. When is waste-paper collection? I scrutinize the kitchen calendar, peering forward into the coming weeks with doubt and fear.

I am, of course, I know, making a fuss about nothing. Untold numbers of human beings have, like that Scottish goodwife, coped with a spouse's absence. For military folk, or wives of sailors and traveling salesmen, it is routine, and a matter of months or years, not weeks. Often enough the absence is permanent, through death or divorce. That is real anguish and trauma. The cross I am bearing here is a very light one.

I seek consolation from those similarly distressed. From Hugh Whitemore's screenplay for the BBC/HBO production of *The Gathering Storm*:

> INCHES: And how are you this morning, Sir?
> CHURCHILL: All right, I think. Thank you for asking. Missing her, of course, but that's to be expected. No point in dwelling on her absence. We must KBO.
> INCHES: Yes, Sir. Keep buggering on at all times, Sir.
> CHURCHILL: KBO. That's the order of the day.

You can depend on Churchill for life advice. Let his order of the day be ours! The Stragglers will KBO—until we are whole again. **NR**

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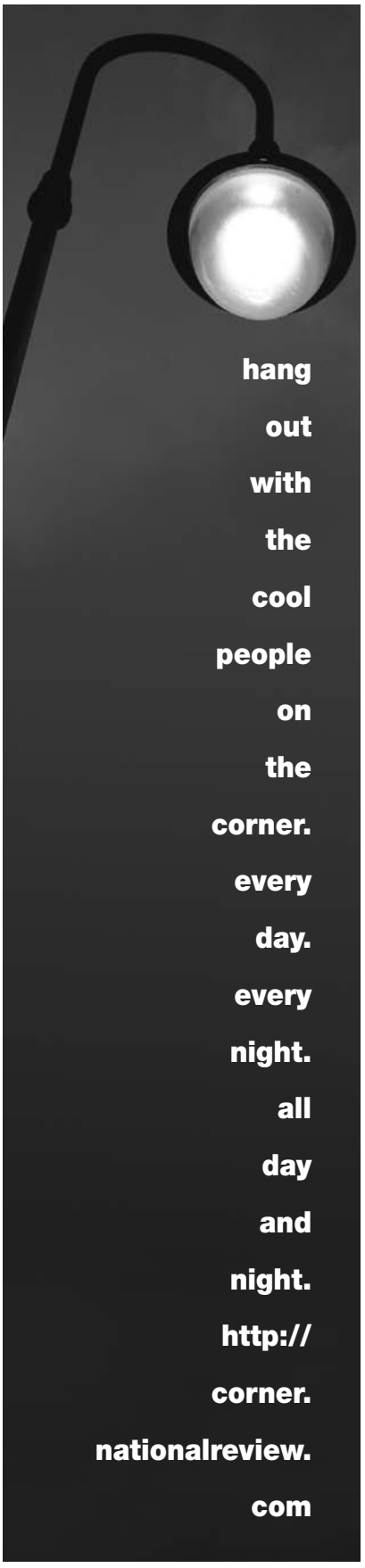

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WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.

The High Cost of Loving Dartmouth

NEW YORK, APRIL 10

THE role of the college trustee is endlessly nibbled about in academic politics. Mostly, the college establishment is regnant. Trustees are expected to be affable creatures, preferably rich and generous. They are not expected to weigh in on college affairs, which are adequately handled by presidents, provosts, deans, and lesser administrative folk.

In my book *God and Man at Yale*, published 56 years ago, I wrote about the phenomenon of the somnolent college trustee. I prophesied that the role of the trustee would one day become a matter of earnest alumni concern, roiling the waters, and this certainly has happened at Dartmouth College.

There is a trustee election happening there this spring that has attracted the attention of critics from coast to coast. Here is the situation: Between April 1 and May 15, Dartmouth alumni will cast their votes. There are lesser candidates in the field, but essentially it is a race between Sandy Alderson, the candidate of the Dartmouth establishment, and petition candidate Stephen Smith.

A quick word is all that is necessary to contrast the candidates. Mr. Alderson is a clubby alumnus with a legal background and a hyper-active career as a baseball executive, not the worst way to gain favorable attention from patrons of the sport, who include the formidable George F. Will, Princeton Ph.D. and a man of sovereign judgment in most matters.

The other principal contender is Stephen Smith. His career might have been written as a Horatio Alger tale. He grew up with a single mother in a municipal slum, worked his way up the slippery education ladder and became a student at Dartmouth. He then went on to the study of law and emerged among the happy few selected by a Supreme Court justice to clerk for one year. From there, Smith went to practice law in Washington and soon was drawn to the University of Virginia, where he holds a chair as a professor of law. He is a practicing Christian, a Catholic with five sons, and add to the above that he is a black American.

Smith's candidacy is backed by members of the Dartmouth community who several years ago resolved to observe closely the development of their college, and to protest trends deemed inimical to its welfare. One of these is the expansion of the administration, which in the last ten years has grown much faster than the Dartmouth faculty. Professor Smith believes that Dartmouth should work to renew its traditional commitment to having students taught in small classes by energetic and learned professors.

Three alumni in recent years have bucked the administration and won election on the premise that a college trustee should devote serious attention to what is going on, on campus. One is industrialist T. J. Rodgers; the second, Todd Zywicki, a professor at George Mason University School of Law; the third, Peter Robinson, a lively fellow of the Hoover Institution. They contended for seats as trustees and won with a majority of the alumni vote. They hope to welcome now as a fourth trustee the learned and eloquent Professor Smith, who, like them, is bent on preserving those traditions at Dartmouth that made it, over the years, so singular an institution of learning, so beloved of its alumni.

It is difficult to understand the hostility so many colleges have toward alumni who are vigorous and devoted. I am myself a veteran of the painful experience of running against the establishment. In 1968, I was nominated as a dissident candidate (you need 500 votes to secure a spot on the voting registry). Official Yale all but collapsed with fear and loathing. They induced the most popular living alumnus to take time off from running the Department of Defense in order to run against me. True, 32 years later I received an honorary degree from Yale, as a prize for losing.

Observers have to acknowledge that there is a role for independent-minded alumni trustees. In the case of Stephen Smith, someone who with every disadvantage known in the land (poverty, single parent, black skin) has triumphed, in an enormously competitive environment, against East Coast snobbery and insularity. This is a moment when one wishes one were an alumnus of Dartmouth, so that one could vote for Steve Smith.

Imus Dead

NEW YORK, APRIL 13

SOME years ago, Cokie Roberts, faithful to her profession and to the proposition that those engaged in public discourse should be left free to do as they liked, stopped short. What did it was a speech at the annual Radio and Television Correspondents' Association dinner, at which, in 1996, 3,000 guests ate and drank in the company of President and Mrs. Clinton and listened to Don Imus.

After that night's performance, Ms. Roberts changed her mind. "I really don't think it would be appropriate for any of us to ever go back on [Imus's show]," she said. Imus's monologue "was profoundly rude not only to the president of the United States and the first lady, but also to our colleagues." Two days later, we learned from Mike McCurry, the president's press secretary, that National Public Radio's Elizabeth Arnold, who sat between him and the first lady on the dais, was trying to incite a mass walkout. In retrospect, McCurry wished he had backed her up instead of sitting there for 25 agonizing minutes. "I was getting prepared to send a note down the table saying, 'Let's go,' when mercifully [the speech] came to an end," McCurry later said. "I think we would have gotten a standing ovation if we'd done it."

Well, eleven years later, "it" was done to Imus, and the sense is of the restoration of clean air. Not universally—nothing like that. The world of hip-hop, one learns, is untouchable. The language there is heavily coarse, profane and perverted. It is ironic that although hip-hop is disproportionately black, it was an anti-black crack that finally undid Don Imus.

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One of his specialties, over the years, was cracks aimed at Jews. It is revealing that these he managed to get away with. Every now and then there was a rebuke, but he stayed on the air. This tells us interesting things about current U.S. culture. One of them is that anti-Semitism is not as mortal as one hoped. Another is that millions of Americans, though they show no evidence of inclining to acts of racial or religious persecution, did not much mind it when Imus broke the basic protocols; it was just a part of his act.

Standing inches away from the president that night in 1996, Imus said, "Mr. President"—he was parodying the questions asked at presidential news conferences—"we all know you're a pot-smoking weasel, that you once ate an apple fritter the size of a baby's head, and that you actually run a 12-minute mile. Could you therefore tell the American people why that thing on your lip looks like a Milk Dud? And if it is a Milk Dud, then I'd like a follow-up."

Clinton was not the only target that night. "The president gets treated better by Rush Limbaugh [than by the White House press corps]. Rush may not, as Al Franken suggests, be a 'big, fat idiot,' but I'm sick of him. The radio show, the television show, the stupid books, and now men's ties—bold, vibrant, colorful, and all designed to look great with a brown shirt." This brought laughter. But anything—anything—will bring laughter to a crowd far gone in booze and impiety.

A huge commotion followed, though not until three days later, when Imus's speech was broadcast on C-SPAN. Imus was quoted as saying that the look he saw in Clinton's eye convinced him that if the president had had a gun, he'd have aimed it at the speaker and shot. A strong metaphor, but when the cocked guns began to go off on Thursday, it gave some satisfaction that there are reserves of decency in the land that sometimes assert themselves.

Facing the Unique

NEW YORK, APRIL 20

THE search for the propellant of the killer-madness in Cho Seung-Hui tells us more about disorders in American thought than about those of the murderer. Recall first and foremost that the crime was quickly identified as the "bloodiest shooting attack in American history" done by a single person. We accepted this—but quickly rejected its corollary: namely, that if it was that—the most violent rampage in 231 years of history— then it had some claim to be called unique. In fact it differs in magnitude but not in kind from shootings in which 23 or 19 people were killed. If a man jumps out of an airplane window at 25,000 feet and survives, it is understandable that there should be public curiosity about how he managed to do so, and scientists will wish to probe the event intending to illuminate, presumably for the benefit of ambitious acrobats, what made it possible. But when the causes of an event are inside a person's mind, such probing is a waste of time, and on the order of presumption.

Intensive study of April 16 could succeed in telling us various ways the script might have been changed to spare Cho's 32 victims.

How? Well, an armed guard might have been retained for every classroom. Wonderful idea! But as the French say, *une fausse idée claire*: a terrific idea that doesn't work. There are 500 classrooms at Virginia Tech.

Well, another idea would be to have barred the lethal weapons from the scene. But doing that would require a kind of cultural revolution, one at great variance with Southern traditions. Yes, such a ban might have been instituted anyway, and yes, efforts might have been made to enforce it, but guns go off in many places where they are illegal. Ask Google about murders in New York City.

Well, Cho Seung-Hui had a history of mental imbalance, and had actually spent time in a mental-health facility—from which, however, he had been discharged, as evidently fit to mingle in society. Does this tell us the simple story that standards are too loose, and Cho Seung-Hui and all others like him should be—isolated?

That reasoning brings to mind J. Edgar Hoover's testimony after the assassination of President Kennedy. The killer, Lee Harvey Oswald, had a security record which included time in the Soviet Union, for which he professed sympathy; a mysterious week in Mexico City during which he tried to obtain a Cuban visa; and membership in a political organization that pleaded for "Fair Play for Cuba." Hoover's observation: If I removed from access to presidential itineraries everyone with indiscretions the equivalent of Oswald's, I'd have to lock up 500 people whenever a president visited Chicago.

So then, despairing of external measures, the scientists went to work. Here is a digest of one report, written by John Schwartz and Benedict Carey for the *New York Times*: "People with so-called avoidant personality disorder shun social situations because of a paralyzing dread of disapproval or criticism. Those with paranoid personality disorder nourish a deep distrust of others and see insults and malicious meanings in almost every interaction. Both are stubborn patterns of behavior that can begin in adolescence or earlier, and in his influential book, *Disorders of Personality* (Wiley, 1996), Dr. Millon identifies a blend of the two as 'insular paranoid' disorder."

Long live the scientists.

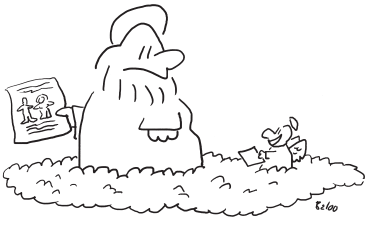
But magnify such research by a factor of 1,000 and we would still not come up with a test that imposed a big X mark on the application for admission by Cho Seung-Hui. We can retroactively pluck from him signs of aberration, but they did not come together beforehand to spell out, NOT FIT FOR ADMISSION.

So you are left with the most violent shooting attack in American history committed by someone you don't have an apparatus for successfully disqualifying or isolating.

We need, then, to return to the paradox: The most modern scientific methods aren't refined enough to discover the most dangerous people in our society.

Pretty soon we'll forget, not the horror of what happened, but the presumption that we can discover and attack evil other than by the cultivation of Biblical rules for human behavior.

—UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE



"I found a way to save a bundle on this project—we can recycle 98 percent of the chimp DNA."

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happy warrior

MARK STEYN

The Shoeless Shuffle

HERE's a sign of the times. On July 6, 1916, *Leslie's Weekly* gave its cover over to a portrait of a finger-pointing Uncle Sam by James Montgomery Flagg. And with the finger-pointing came a question: "What Are You Doing for Preparedness?"—i.e., preparedness for war. When it came, Mr. Flagg's rendering of Uncle Sam was pressed into service again, for a famous recruiting poster:

"I Want You for U.S. Army."

I saw that portrait again the other day. Same uncle, same finger, new war. This latest poster is above the machine that scans your shoes and cellphone and loose change at Burlington Airport, Vermont. The familiar Flagg figure now bears an updated slogan:

"Uncle Sam Needs You to Be Safe."

A message from the Department of Homeland Security.

It was a long line at security. So I had time to wonder how the government's poster would strike Ben Franklin or whoever wrote the words usually attributed to him: "Those who would give up essential liberty to purchase a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety." And I had time to reflect on the pronounced Orwellian frisson of the slogan as I shuffled forward sans shoes, sans BlackBerry, sans everything. The slo-mo rituals of airport security are all the "war on terror" means to most Americans, and may well be all that survives once a new president is sworn in.

It's theater for the most part: You show your picture ID, but so what? Everyone's got picture ID. The 9/11 guys had multiple picture IDs. And many American states provide, as a matter of policy, picture ID to people who are in the country illegally. But we go along with the theater, and the weary shuffle, as a TSA man walks along the line bellowing at us to make sure we don't have prohibited items, such as a large tube of toothpaste or the weaponizable quart of New Hampshire maple syrup for my aunt with which my little girl foolishly tried to board the plane the other day.

And every few minutes over the speaker a voice tells us that the Department of Homeland Security has "raised the threat level to . . . [dramatic pause] orange." He drops an octave on "orange"; it's the butchest "orange" you've ever heard. Invited to come up with a rhyme for the famously unrhymeable fruit, Irving Berlin proposed "door hinge," which I always thought was pretty feeble. Berlin's fellow lyricist Sammy Cahn explained to me that "orange/door hinge" rhymes in a certain kind of dense Bronx accent, but I said I'd traveled widely in the Bronx interior and wasn't persuaded. Yet this deep manly octave-dropping voice on the airport intercom almost pulls it off: The threat level has been raised to oorhinge.

"Orange" is the level below "red," which presumably is when someone nukes Des Moines. "Orange" means "high risk of terrorist attacks." Does it feel like "orange" to you? After the Virginia Tech massacre, there was a spirited exchange (to put it mildly) at NATIONAL REVIEW ONLINE about whether a nut with no firearms expertise should have been able to kill dozens of people quite so easily. My colleague John Podhoretz sided with many of our correspondents who felt it was unreasonable to expect young persons on a remote college campus to be prepared for such an attack and to have any clear idea of what might be done to lessen its effects.

Which is a reasonable position. Except that America is supposedly a nation at war. John wrote a bestselling book called *Bush Country* whose very first page is solely concerned with Bush as leader of a nation at war. Yet he, like everyone else, seems subconsciously to have detached the nation from the war. If some murderous attack took place at Burlington College or UVM, no doubt commentators would say, well, it's a bucolic college-town setting, last place in the world anyone would be expecting anything. Yet those students have to get to the terminal an hour early to board a 16-seat puddle-jumper because Burlington Airport is such a critical front in the national defenses that it's on permanent Code Orange.

That disconnect is not as wide as first it appears. The "gun-free zones" of the college campuses and the Code Orange security lines at small airports are operating on the same principle. When Virginia Tech forbids law-abiding students to have firearms, they're engaging in the same lazy universalism as airport security: They're profiling products rather than people. To modify the bumper sticker, toothpaste doesn't kill people; people who weaponize toothpaste kill people. But in a squeamish non-judgmental society it's easier to target gran'ma's overnight bag. You don't need to wonder where the yellow went in a system so craven it devotes vast resources to banning Pepsodent.

Uncle Sam may "need" me to be safe, but he cannot guarantee my safety any more than the "gun-free zone" of Virginia Tech guaranteed anybody's safety. And, as for the original slogan of James Montgomery Flagg's finger-pointer—"What Are You Doing for Preparedness?"—most of us shrug: It's Bush's war. In Vermont, they're prepared mainly to oppose whatever he comes up with next. Next to me at Burlington Airport was a car with the bumper sticker "I'm Already Against the Next War."

There's another Flagg poster from 1917 that seems more relevant: a star-spangled gal in Phrygian cap recumbent in wicker chair as the storm clouds gather. "Wake Up, America! Civilization Calls Every Man, Woman and Child!" He can call but no one's picking up. We save our war footing for the Code Orange shoeless shuffle. **NR**

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